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THE GORGON'S HEAD.

PERSEUS was the son of Danae, who was the daughter of a king. And when Perseus was a very little boy some wicked people put his mother and himself into a chest, and set them afloat upon the sea. The wind blew freshly and drove the chest away from the shore, and the uneasy billows tossed it up and down, while Danae clasped her child to her bosom, and dreaded that some big wave would dash its foamy crest over them both. The chest sailed on, however, and neither sank nor was upset until, when night was coming it floated so near an island that it got entangled in a fisherman's nets, and was drawn out high and dry upon the sand. The island was called Seriphus, and it was reigned over by King Polydectes, who happened to be the fisherman's brother. This fisherman, I am glad to tell you, was an exceedingly humane and upright man. He showed great kindness to Danae and her little boy, and continued to befriend them until Perseus had grown to be a handsome youth, very strong and active and skilful in the use of arms. Long before this time, King Polydectes had seen the two strangers—the mother and her child—who had come to his dominions in a floating chest. As he was not good and kind, like his brother the fisherman, but extremely wicked, he resolved to send Perseus on a dangerous enterprise, in which he would probably be killed, and then to do some great mischief to Danae herself. So this bad-hearted king spent a long while in considering what was the most dangerous thing that a young man could possibly undertake to perform. At last, having

hit upon an enterprise that promised to turn out as fatally as he desired, he sent for the youthful Perseus.

The young man came to the palace, and found the king sitting upon his throne.

"Perseus," said King Polydectes, smiling craftily upon him, "you are grown up a fine young man. You and your good mother have received a great deal of kindness from myself, as well as from my worthy brother the fisherman, and I suppose you would not be sorry to repay some of it."

"Please, your majesty," answered Perseus, "I would willingly risk my life to do so."

"Well, then," continued the king, with a cunning smile on his lips, "I have a little adventure to propose to you, and, as you are a brave and enterprising youth, you will doubtless look upon it as a great piece of good luck to have so rare an opportunity of distinguishing yourself. You must know, my good Perseus, I think of getting married to the beautiful Princess Hippodamia; and it is customary, on these occasions, to make the bride a present of some far-fetched and elegant curiosity. I have been a little perplexed, I must honestly confess, where to obtain anything likely to please a princess of her exquisite taste. But, this morning, I flatter myself, I have thought of precisely the article."

"And can I assist your majesty in obtaining it?" cried Perseus eagerly.

"You can, if you are as brave a youth as I believe you to be," replied King Polydectes, with the utmost graciousness of manner. "The bridal gift which I have set my heart on presenting to the beautiful Hippodamia is the head of the Gorgon Medusa with the snaky locks, and I depend on you, my dear Perseus, to bring it to me. So, as I am anxious to settle affairs with the princess, the sooner you go in quest of the Gorgon, the better I shall be pleased."

"I will set out to-morrow morning," answered Perseus.

"Pray, do so, my gallant youth," rejoined the king. "And, Perseus, in cutting off the Gorgon's head, be careful to make

a clean stroke, so as not to injure its appearance. You must bring it home in the very best condition in order to suit the exquisite taste of the beautiful Princess Hippodamia."

Perseus left the palace, but was scarcely out of hearing before Polydectes burst into a laugh; being greatly amused, wicked king that he was, to find how readily the young man fell into the snare. The news quickly spread abroad that Perseus had undertaken to cut off the head of Medusa with the snaky locks. Everybody was rejoiced; for most of the inhabitants of the island were as wicked as the king himself, and would have liked nothing better than to see some enormous mischief happen to Danae and her son. The only good man in this unfortunate island of Seriphus appears to have been the fisherman. As Perseus walked along, therefore, the people pointed after him, and made mouths, and winked to one another, and ridiculed him as loudly as they dared.

"Ho, ho!" cried they, "Medusa's snakes will sting him soundly!"

Now, there were three Gorgons alive, at that period, and they were the most strange and terrible monsters that had ever been seen since the world was made, or that have been seen in after-days, or that are likely to be seen in all time to come. I hardly know what sort of creature or hobgoblin to call them. They were three sisters, and seem to have borne some distant resemblance to women, but were really a very frightful and mischievous species of dragon. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine what hideous beings these three sisters were. Why, instead of locks of hair, if you can believe me, they had each of them a hundred enormous snakes growing on their heads, all alive, twisting, wriggling, curling, and thrusting out their venomous tongues, with forked stings at the end! The teeth of the Gorgons were terribly long tusks; their hands were made of brass; and their bodies were all over scales, which if not iron were something as hard and impenetrable. They had wings, too, and exceed-

ingly splendid ones, I can assure you ; for every feather in them was pure, bright, glittering, burnished gold, and they looked very dazzling, no doubt, when the Gorgons were flying about in the sunshine.

But when people happened to catch a glimpse of their glittering brightness, aloft in the air, they seldom stopped to gaze, but ran and hid themselves as speedily as they could. You will think, perhaps, that they were afraid of being stung by the serpents that served the Gorgons instead of hair,—or of having their heads bitten off by their ugly tusks,—or of being torn all to pieces by their brazen claws. Well, to be sure, these were some of the dangers, but by no means the greatest, nor the most difficult to avoid. For the worst thing about these abominable Gorgons was, that if once a poor mortal fixed his eyes full upon one of their faces, he was certain, that very instant, to be changed from warm flesh and blood into cold and lifeless stone !

Thus, as you will easily perceive, it was a very dangerous adventure that the wicked King Polydectes had contrived for this innocent young man. Perseus himself, when he had thought over the matter, could not help seeing that he had very little chance of coming safely through it, and that he was far more likely to become a stone image than to bring back the head of Medusa with the snaky locks. For not to speak of other difficulties, there was one which it would have puzzled an older man than Perseus to get over. Not only must he fight with and slay this golden-winged, iron-scaled, long-tusked, brazen-clawed, snaky-haired monster, but he must do it with his eyes shut, or, at least, without so much as a glance at the enemy with whom he was contending. Else, while his arm was lifted to strike, he would stiffen into stone, and stand with that uplifted arm for centuries, until time, and the wind and weather, should crumble him quite away. This would be a very sad thing to befall a young man who wanted to perform a great many brave deeds, and to enjoy a great deal of happiness, in this bright and beautiful world.

So disconsolate did these thoughts make him, that Perseus could not bear to tell his mother what he had undertaken to do. He therefore took his shield, girded on his sword, and crossed over from the island to the mainland, where he sat down in a solitary place and hardly refrained from shedding tears. But, while he was in this sorrowful mood, he heard a voice close beside him.

"Perseus," said the voice, "why are you sad?"

He lifted his head from his hands, in which he had hidden it, and, behold! all alone as Perseus had supposed himself to be, there was a stranger in the solitary place. It was a brisk, intelligent, and remarkably shrewd looking young man, with a cloak over his shoulders, an odd sort of cap on his head, a strangely twisted staff in his hand, and a short and very crooked sword hanging by his side. He was exceedingly light and active in his figure, like a person much accustomed to gymnastic exercises, and well able to leap or run. Above all, the stranger had such a cheerful, knowing and helpful aspect (though it was certainly a little mischievous into the bargain), that Perseus could not help feeling his spirits grow livelier, as he gazed at him. Besides, being really a courageous youth, he felt greatly ashamed that anybody should have found him with tears in his eyes, like a timid schoolboy, when, after all, perhaps there might be no occasion for despair. So Perseus wiped his eyes, and answered the stranger pretty briskly, putting on as brave a look as he could.

"I am not so very sad," said he, "only thoughtful about an adventure that I have undertaken."

"Oho!" answered the stranger. "Well, tell me all about it, and possibly I may be of service to you. I have helped a good many young men through adventures that looked difficult enough beforehand. Perhaps you may have heard of me. I have more names than one; but the name of Quicksilver suits me as well as any other. Tell me what your trouble is, and we will talk the matter over, and see what can be done."

The stranger's words and manner put Perseus into quite a different mood from his former one. He resolved to tell Quicksilver all his difficulties, since he could not easily be worse off than he already was, and very possibly his new friend might give him some advice that would turn out well in the end. So he let the stranger know, in a few words, precisely what the case was,—how that King Polydectes wanted the head of Medusa with the snaky locks as a bridal gift for the beautiful Princess Hippodamia, and how that he had undertaken to get it for him but was afraid of being turned into stone.

"And that would be a great pity," said Quicksilver, with his mischievous smile. "You would make a very handsome marble statue it is true; and it would be a considerable number of centuries before you crumbled away; but, on the whole, you would rather be a young man for a few years than a stone image for a great many."

"Oh, far rather!" exclaimed Perseus, with the tears again standing in his eyes. "And, besides, what would my dear mother do, if her beloved son were turned into a stone?"

"Well, well; let us hope that the affair will not turn out so very badly," replied Quicksilver, in an encouraging tone. "I am the very person to help you, if anybody can. My sister and myself will do our utmost to bring you safe through the adventure, ugly as it now looks."

"Your sister?" repeated Perseus.

"Yes, my sister," said the stranger. "She is very wise, I promise you; and as for myself, I generally have all my wits about me, such as they are. If you show yourself bold and cautious, and follow our advice, you need not fear being a stone image yet awhile. But first of all you must polish your shield till you can see your face in it as distinctly as in a mirror."

This seemed to Perseus rather an odd beginning of the adventure; for he thought it of far more consequence that the shield should be strong enough to defend him from the

Gorgon's brazen claws, than that it should be bright enough to show him the reflection of his face. However, concluding that Quicksilver knew better than himself, he immediately set to work and scrubbed the shield with so much diligence and goodwill, that it very quickly shone like the moon at harvest time. Quicksilver looked at it with a smile and nodded his approbation. Then, taking off his own short and crooked sword, he girded it about Perseus instead of the one which he had before worn.

"No sword but mine will answer your purpose," observed he; "the blade has a most excellent temper, and will cut through iron and brass as easily as through the slenderest twig. And now we will set out. The next thing is to find the Three Grey Women, who will tell us where to find the Nymphs."

"The Three Grey Women!" cried Perseus, to whom this seemed only a new difficulty in the path of his adventure, "pray who may the Three Grey Women be? I never heard of them before."

"They are three very strange old ladies," said Quicksilver laughing. "They have but one eye among them, and only one tooth. Moreover, you must find them out by starlight, or in the dusk of the evening; for they never show themselves by the light either of the sun or moon."

"But," said Perseus, "why should I waste my time with these Three Grey Women? Would it not be better to set out at once in search of the terrible Gorgons?"

"No, no," answered his friend. "There are other things to be done, before you can find your way to the Gorgons. There is nothing for it but to hunt up these old ladies, and when we meet with them, you may be sure that the Gorgons are not a great way off. Come, let us be stirring!"

Perseus, by this time, felt so much confidence in his companion's sagacity, that he made no more objections, and professed himself ready to begin the adventure immediately. They accordingly set out and walked at a pretty brisk pace;

so brisk indeed that Perseus found it rather difficult to keep up with his nimble friend Quicksilver. To say the truth, he had a singular idea that Quicksilver was furnished with a pair of winged shoes, which of course helped him along marvellously. And then, too, when Perseus looked sideways at him out of the corner of his eyes, he seemed to see wings on the side of his head; although, if he turned a full gaze there were no such things to be perceived, but only an odd kind of cap. But, at all events, the twisted staff was evidently a great convenience to Quicksilver, and enabled him to proceed so fast that Perseus, though a remarkably active young man, began to be out of breath.

"Here!" cried Quicksilver, at last—for he knew well enough, rogue that he was, how hard Perseus found it to keep pace with him—"take you the staff, for you need it a great deal more than I. Are there no better walkers than yourself in the island of Seriphus?"

"I could walk pretty well," said Perseus, glancing slyly at his companion's feet, "if I had only a pair of winged shoes."

"We must see about getting you a pair," answered Quicksilver.

But the staff helped Perseus along so bravely, that he no longer felt the slightest weariness. In fact, the stick seemed to be alive in his hand, and to lend some of its life to Perseus. He and Quicksilver now walked onward at their ease, talking very sociably together, and Quicksilver told so many pleasant stories about his former adventures, and how well his wits had served him on various occasions, that Perseus began to think him a very wonderful person. He evidently knew the world; and nobody is so charming to a young man as a friend who has that kind of knowledge. Perseus listened the more eagerly, in the hope of brightening his own wits by what he heard.

At last, he happened to recollect that Quicksilver had spoken of a sister, who was to lend her assistance in the adventure which they were now bound upon.

"Where is she?" he inquired. "Shall we not meet her soon?"

"All at the proper time," said his companion. "But this sister of mine, you must understand, is quite a different sort of person from myself. She is very grave and prudent, seldom smiles, never laughs, and makes it a rule not to utter a word unless she has something particularly profound to say. Neither will she listen to any but the wisest conversation."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Perseus, "I shall be afraid to say a syllable."

"She is a very accomplished person, I assure you," continued Quicksilver, "and has all the arts and sciences at her fingers' ends. In short, she is so immoderately wise, that many people call her wisdom personified. But, to tell you the truth, she has hardly vivacity enough for my taste, and I think you would scarcely find her so pleasant a travelling companion as myself. She has her good points, nevertheless; and you will find the benefit of them in your encounter with the Gorgons."

By this time it had grown quite dusk. They were now come to a very wild and desert place, overgrown with shaggy bushes, and so silent and solitary that nobody seemed ever to have dwelt or journeyed there. All was waste and desolate in the grey twilight which grew every moment more obscure. Perseus looked about him rather disconsolately, and asked Quicksilver whether they had a great deal farther to go.

"Hist! hist!" whispered his companion. "Make no noise! This is just the time and place to meet the Three Grey Women. Be careful that they do not see you before you see them, for, though they have but a single eye among the three, it is as sharp-sighted as half a dozen common eyes."

"But what must I do," asked Perseus, "when we meet them?"

Quicksilver explained to Perseus how the Three Grey

Women managed with their one eye. They were in the habit, it seems, of changing it from one to another, as if it had been a pair of spectacles, or which would have suited them better, a quizzing-glass. When one of the three had kept the eye a certain time, she took it out of the socket and passed it to one of her sisters, whose turn it might happen to be, and who immediately clapped it into her own head and enjoyed a peep at the visible world. Thus it will easily be understood that only one of the Three Grey Women could see, while the other two were in utter darkness, and, moreover, at the instant when the eye was passing from hand to hand neither of the poor ladies was able to see a wink. I have heard of a great many strange things in my day, and have witnessed not a few, but none it seems to me that can compare with the oddity of these Three Grey Women, all peeping through a single eye.

So thought Perseus likewise, and was so astonished that he almost fancied his companion was joking with him and that there were no such old women in the world.

"You will soon find whether I tell the truth or no," observed Quicksilver. "Hark! hush! hist! hist! There they come, now!"

Perseus looked earnestly through the dusk of the evening, and there, sure enough, at no great distance off, he descried the Three Grey Women. The light being so faint, he could not well make out what sort of figures they were—only he discovered that they had long grey hair; and, as they came nearer, he saw that two of them had but the empty socket of an eye in the middle of their foreheads. But in the middle of the third sister's forehead, there was a very large, bright and piercing eye, which sparkled like a great diamond in a ring, and so penetrating did it seem to be, that Perseus could not help thinking it must possess the gift of seeing in the darkest midnight just as perfectly as at noon-day. The sight of three persons' eyes was melted and collected into that single one.

Thus the three old dames got along about as comfortably, upon the whole, as if they could all see at once. She who chanced to have the eye in her forehead led the other two by the hands, peeping sharply about her all the while; insomuch that Perseus dreaded lest she should see right through the thick clump of bushes behind which he and Quicksilver had hidden themselves. My stars! it was positively terrible to be within reach of so very sharp an eye!

But, before they reached the clump of bushes, one of the Three Grey Women spoke:—

“Sister! Sister Scarecrow!” cried she, “you have had the eye long enough. It is my turn now!”

“Let me keep it a moment longer, Sister Nightmare,” answered Scarecrow. “I thought I had a glimpse of something behind that thick bush.”

“Well, and what of that?” retorted Nightmare peevishly. “Can’t I see into a thick bush as easily as yourself? The eye is mine as well as yours, and I know the use of it as well as you, or may be a little better. I insist upon taking a peep immediately!”

But here the third sister, whose name was Shakejoint, began to complain, and said it was her turn to have the eye, and that Scarecrow and Nightmare wanted to keep it all to themselves. To end the dispute, old Dame Scarecrow took the eye out of her forehead, and held it forth in her hand.

“Take it one of you,” cried she, “and quit this foolish quarrelling. For my part, I shall be glad of a little thick darkness. Take it quickly, however, or I must clap it into my own head again!”

Accordingly, both Nightmare and Shakejoint put out their hands groping eagerly to snatch the eye out of the hand of Scarecrow. But, being both alike blind, they could not easily find where Scarecrow’s hand was, and Scarecrow, being now just as much in the dark as Shakejoint and Night-

mare, could not at once meet either of their hands in order to put the eye into it. Thus these good old dames had fallen into a strange perplexity. For, though the eye shone and glistened like a star, as Scarecrow held it out, yet the Grey Women caught not the least glimpse of its light, and were all three in utter darkness from too impatient a desire to see.

Quicksilver was so much tickled at beholding Shakejoint and Nightmare both groping for the eye and each finding fault with Scarecrow and one another that he could scarcely help laughing aloud.

"Now is your time!" he whispered to Perseus. "Quick, quick! before they can clap the eye into either of their heads. Rush out upon the old ladies, and snatch it from Scarecrow's hand!"

In an instant, while the Three Grey Women were still scolding each other, Perseus leaped from behind the clump of bushes and made himself master of the prize. The marvellous eye, as he held it in his hand, shone very brightly and seemed to look up into his face with a knowing air and an expression as if it would have winked, had it been provided with a pair of eyelids for that purpose. But the Grey Women knew nothing of what had happened, and, each supposing that one of her sisters was in possession of the eye, they began their quarrel anew. At last, as Perseus did not wish to put these respectable dames to greater inconvenience than was really necessary, he thought it right to explain the matter.

"My good ladies," said he, "pray do not be angry with one another. If anybody is in fault it is myself; for I have the honour to hold your very brilliant and excellent eye in my own hand!"

"You! you have our eye! And who are you then?" screamed the Three Grey Women, all in a breath, for they were terribly frightened, of course, at hearing a strange voice, and discovering that their eyesight had got into the hands of

they could not guess whom. "Oh! what shall we do, sisters? what shall we do? We are all in the dark! Give us our eye! Give us our eye! Give us our one precious solitary eye. You have two of your own! Give us our eye!"

"Tell them," whispered Quicksilver to Perseus, "that they shall have back the eye as soon as they direct you where to find the Nymphs who have the flying slippers, the magic wallet, and the helmet of darkness".

"My dear, good, admirable old ladies," said Perseus, addressing the Grey Women, "there is no occasion for putting yourselves into such a fright. I am by no means a bad young man. You shall have back your eye, safe and sound, and as bright as ever, the moment you tell me where to find the Nymphs."

"The Nymphs! Goodness me, sisters! what Nymphs does he mean?" screamed Scarecrow. "There are a great many Nymphs, people say, some that go a-hunting in the woods, and some that live inside of trees, and some that have a comfortable home in fountains of water. We know nothing at all about them. We are three unfortunate old souls, that go wandering about in the dusk, and never had but one eye amongst us, and that one you have stolen away. Oh, give it back, good stranger! whoever you are give it back!"

All this while the Three Grey Women were groping with their outstretched hands and trying their utmost to get hold of Perseus. But he took good care to keep out of their reach.

"My respectable dames," said he—for his mother had taught him always to use the greatest civility—"I hold your eye fast in my hand, and shall keep it safely for you, until you please to tell me where to find these Nymphs. The Nymphs, I mean, who keep the enchanted wallet, the flying slippers, and the—what is it?—the helmet of invisibility."

"Mercy on us, sisters! what is the young man talking

about?" exclaimed Scarecrow, Nightmare, and Shakejoint, one to another with great appearance of astonishment. "A pair of flying slippers, quoth he! His heels would quickly fly higher than his head, if he were silly enough to put them on. And a helmet of invisibility! How could a helmet make him invisible, unless it were big enough for him to hide under it? And an enchanted wallet! What sort of contrivance may that be, I wonder? No, no, good stranger! We can tell you nothing of these marvellous things. You have two eyes of your own and we but a single one amongst us three. You can find out such wonders better than three blind old creatures, like us."

Perseus, hearing them talk in this way, began really to think that the Grey Women knew nothing of the matter, and as it grieved him to have put them to so much trouble, he was just on the point of restoring their eye, and asking pardon for his rudeness in snatching it away. But Quicksilver caught his hand.

"Don't let them make a fool of you!" said he. "These Three Grey Women are the only persons in the world that can tell you where to find the Nymphs; and, unless you get that information, you will never succeed in cutting off the head of Medusa with the snaky locks. Keep fast hold of the eye, and all will go well."

As it turned out, Quicksilver was in the right. There are but few things that people prize so much as they do their eyesight, and the Grey Women valued their single eye as highly as if it had been half a dozen, which was the number they ought to have had. Finding that there was no other way of recovering it, they at last told Perseus what he wanted to know. No sooner had they done so, than he immediately, and with the utmost respect, clapped the eye into the vacant socket of one of their foreheads, thanked them for their kindness, and bade them farewell. Before the young man was out of hearing, however, they had got into a new dispute, because he happened to have given

the eye to Scarecrow, who had already taken her turn of it when their trouble with Perseus commenced.

It is greatly to be feared that the Three Grey Women were very much in the habit of disturbing their mutual harmony by bickerings of this sort: which was the more pity, as they could not conveniently do without one another, and were evidently intended to be inseparable companions. As a general rule, I would advise all people, whether sisters or brothers, old or young, who chance to have but one eye amongst them, to cultivate forbearance, and not all insist upon peeping through it at once.

Quicksilver and Perseus, in the meantime, were making the best of their way in quest of the Nymphs. The old dames had given them such particular directions that they were not long in finding them out. They proved to be very different persons from Nightmare, Shakejoint, and Scarecrow; for, instead of being old, they were young and beautiful; and instead of one eye amongst the sisterhood, each Nymph had two exceedingly bright eyes of her own, with which she looked very kindly at Perseus. They seemed to be acquainted with Quicksilver; and when he told them the adventure which Perseus had undertaken, they made no difficulty about giving him the valuable articles that were in their custody. In the first place, they brought out what appeared to be a small purse made of deerskin, and curiously embroidered, and bade him be sure and keep it safe. This was the magic wallet. The Nymphs next produced a pair of shoes, or slippers, with a nice little pair of wings at the heel of each.

"Put them on, Perseus," said Quicksilver. "You will find yourself as light-heeled as you can desire for the remainder of our journey."

So Perseus proceeded to put one of the slippers on, while he laid the other on the ground by his side. Unexpectedly, however, this other slipper spread its wings, fluttered up off the ground, and would probably have flown away if Quick-

silver had not made a leap, and luckily caught it in the air.

"Be more careful," said he, as he gave it back to Perseus. "It would frighten the birds, up aloft, if they should see a flying slipper amongst them."

When Perseus had got on both of these wonderful slippers, he was altogether too buoyant to tread on earth. Making a step or two, lo and behold! upward he popped into the air, high above the heads of Quicksilver and the Nymphs, and found it very difficult to clamber down again. Winged slippers, and all such high-flying contrivances, are seldom quite easy to manage until one grows a little accustomed to them. Quicksilver laughed at his companion's involuntary activity, and told him that he must not be in so desperate a hurry, but must wait for the invisible helmet.

The good-natured Nymphs had the helmet, with its dark tuft of waving plumes, all in readiness to put upon his head. And now there happened about as wonderful an incident as anything that I have yet told you. The instant before the helmet was put on, there stood Perseus, a beautiful young man, with golden ringlets and rosy cheeks, the crooked sword by his side, and the brightly-polished shield upon his arm—a figure that seemed all made up of courage, sprightliness, and glorious light. But when the helmet had descended over his white brow, there was no longer any Perseus to be seen! Nothing but empty air! Even the helmet, that covered him with its invisibility, had vanished!

"Where are you, Perseus?" asked Quicksilver.

"Why, here, to be sure!" answered Perseus, very quietly, although his voice seemed to come out of the transparent atmosphere. "Just where I was a moment ago. Don't you see me?"

"No, indeed!" answered his friend. "You are hidden under the helmet. But, if I cannot see you, neither can the Gorgons. Follow me, therefore, and we will try your dexterity in using the winged slippers."

With these words Quicksilver's cap spread its wings, as if his head were about to fly away from his shoulders; but his whole figure rose lightly into the air, and Perseus followed. By the time they had ascended a few hundred feet, the young man began to feel what a delightful thing it was to leave the dull earth so far beneath him, and to be able to flit about like a bird.

It was now deep night. Perseus looked upward, and saw the round, bright, silvery moon, and thought that he should desire nothing better than to soar up thither, and spend his life there. Then he looked downward again, and saw the earth, with its seas, and lakes, and the silver courses of its rivers, and its snowy mountain-peaks, and the breadth of its fields, and the dark cluster of its woods, and its cities of white marble, and, with the moonshine sleeping over the whole scene, it was as beautiful as the moon or any star could be. And, among other objects, he saw the island of Seriphus, where his dear mother was. Sometimes he and Quicksilver approached a cloud, that, at a distance, looked as if it were made of fleecy silver, although when they plunged into it, they found themselves chilled and moistened with grey mist. So swift was their flight, however, that in an instant they emerged from the cloud into the moonlight again. Once, a high-soaring eagle flew right against the invisible Perseus. The bravest sights were the meteors, that gleamed suddenly out, as if a bonfire had been kindled in the sky, and made the moonshine pale for as much as a hundred miles around them.

As the two companions flew onward, Perseus fancied that he could hear the rustle of a garment close by his side, and it was on the side opposite to the one where he beheld Quicksilver, yet only Quicksilver was visible.

"Whose garment is this," inquired Perseus, "that keeps rustling close beside me in the breeze."

"Oh, it is my sister's!" answered Quicksilver. "She is coming along with us, as I told you she would. We could

do nothing without the help of my sister. You have no idea how wise she is. She has such eyes, too! Why, she can see you, at this moment, just as distinctly as if you were not invisible, and I'll venture to say, she will be the first to discover the Gorgons."

By this time, in their swift voyage through the air, they had come within sight of the great ocean, and were soon flying over it. Far beneath them, the waves tossed themselves tumultuously in mid-sea, or rolled a white surf-line upon the long beaches, or foamed against the rocky cliffs, with a roar that was thunderous in the lower world, although it became a gentle murmur, like the voice of a baby half asleep, before it reached the ears of Perseus. Just then a voice spoke in the air close by him. It seemed to be a woman's voice, and was melodious, though not exactly what might be called sweet, but grave and mild.

"Perseus," said the voice, "there are the Gorgons."

"Where?" exclaimed Perseus. "I cannot see them."

"On the shore of that island beneath you," replied the voice. "A pebble dropped from your hand, would strike in the midst of them."

"I told you she would be the first to discover them," said Quicksilver to Perseus. "And there they are!"

Straight downward, two or three thousand feet below him, Perseus perceived a small island, with the sea breaking into white foam all around its rocky shore, except on one side, where there was a beach of snowy sand. He descended towards it, and looking earnestly at a cluster or heap of brightness at the foot of a precipice of black rocks, behold, there were the terrible Gorgons! They lay fast asleep, soothed by the thunder of the sea, for it required a tumult that would have deafened everybody else to lull such fierce creatures into slumber. The moonlight glistened on their steely scales, and on their golden wings, which drooped idly over the sand. Their brazen claws, horrible to look at, were thrust out, and clutched the wave-beaten fragment of rock;

while the sleeping Gorgons dreamed of tearing some poor mortal all to pieces. The snakes that served them instead of hair seemed likewise to be asleep, although, now and then, one would writhe, and lift its head, and thrust out its forked tongue, emitting a drowsy hiss, and then let itself subside among its sister snakes.

The Gorgons were more like an awful, gigantic kind of insect—immense, golden-winged beetles or dragon-flies, or things of that sort, at once ugly and beautiful—than like anything else, only that they were a thousand and a million times as big. And, with all this, there was something partly human about them, too. Luckily for Perseus, their faces were completely hidden from him by the posture in which they lay, for had he but looked one instant at them, he would have fallen heavily out of the air, an image of senseless stone.

"Now," whispered Quicksilver, as he hovered by the side of Perseus, "now is your time to do the deed! Be quick, for if one of the Gorgons should awake, you are too late!"

"Which shall I strike at?" asked Perseus, drawing his sword and descending a little lower. "They all three look alike. All three have snaky locks. Which of the three is Medusa?"

It must be understood that Medusa was the only one of these dragon-monsters whose head Perseus could possibly cut off. As for the other two, let him have the sharpest sword that ever was forged, and he might have hacked away by the hour together, without doing them the least harm.

"Be cautious," said the calm voice which had before spoken to him. "One of the Gorgons is stirring in her sleep, and is just about to turn over. That is Medusa. Do not look at her! The sight would turn you to stone! Look at the reflection of her face and figure in the bright mirror of your shield."

Perseus now understood Quicksilver's motive for so earnestly exhorting him to polish his shield. In its surface

he could safely look at the reflection of the Gorgon's face. And there it was,—that terrible countenance,—mirrored in the brightness of the shield, with the moonlight falling over it and displaying all its horror. The snakes, whose venomous nature could not altogether sleep, kept twisting themselves over the forehead. It was the fiercest and most horrible face that ever was seen or imagined, and yet with a strange, fearful, and savage kind of beauty in it. The eyes were closed, and the Gorgon was still in a deep slumber; but there was an unquiet expression disturbing her features, as if the monster was troubled with an ugly dream. She gnashed her white tusks, and dug into the sand with her brazen claws.

The snakes, too, seemed to feel Medusa's dream and to be made more restless by it. They twined themselves into tumultuous knots, writhed fiercely, and uplifted a hundred hissing heads, without opening their eyes.

"Now, now!" whispered Quicksilver, who was growing impatient. "Make a dash at the monster!"

"But be calm," said the grave, melodious voice at the young man's side. "Look in your shield, as you fly downward, and take care that you do not miss your first stroke."

Perseus flew cautiously downward, still keeping his eyes on Medusa's face, as reflected in his shield. The nearer he came, the more terrible did the snaky visage and metallic body of the monster grow. At last, when he found himself hovering over her within arm's length, Perseus uplifted his sword while at the same instant, each separate snake upon the Gorgon's head stretched threateningly upward, and Medusa unclosed her eyes. But she awoke too late. The sword was sharp, the stroke fell like a lightning-flash, and the head of the wicked Medusa tumbled from her body.

"Admirably done!" cried Quicksilver, "make haste, and clap the head into your magic wallet."

To the astonishment of Perseus, the small, embroidered wallet, which he had hung about his neck, and which had

hitherto been no bigger than a purse, grew all at once large enough to contain Medusa's head. As quick as thought he snatched it up, with the snakes still writhing upon it, and thrust it in.

"Your task is done," said the calm voice. "Now fly, for the other Gorgons will do their utmost to take vengeance for Medusa's death."

It was, indeed, necessary to take flight, for Perseus had not done the deed so quietly, but that the clash of his sword, and the hissing of the snakes, and the thump of Medusa's head as it tumbled upon the sea-beaten sand, awoke the other two monsters. There they sat, for an instant, sleepily rubbing their eyes with their brazen fingers while all the snakes on their heads reared themselves on end with surprise, and with venomous malice against they knew not what. But when the Gorgons saw the scaly carcass of Medusa, headless, and her golden wings all ruffled, and half-spread out on the sand, it was really awful to hear what yells and screeches they set up. And then the snakes! They sent forth a hundred-fold hiss with one consent, and Medusa's snakes answered them out of the magic wallet.

No sooner were the Gorgons broad awake, than they hurtled upward into the air, brandishing their brass talons, gnashing their horrible tusks, and flapping their huge wings so wildly that some of the golden feathers were shaken out, and floated down upon the shore. And there, perhaps, those very feathers lie scattered till this day. Up rose the Gorgons, as I tell you, staring horribly about, in hopes of turning somebody to stone. Had Perseus looked them in the face, or had he fallen into their clutches, his poor mother would never have kissed her boy again! But he took good care to turn his eyes another way, and, as he wore the helmet of invisibility, the Gorgons knew not in what direction to follow him, nor did he fail to make the best use of the winged slippers, by soaring upward a mile or so. At that height, when the screams of those abominable creatures



Perseus kills the horrible Sea-monster.

sounded faintly beneath him, he made a straight course for the island of Seriphus, in order to carry Medusa's head to King Polydectes.

I have no time to tell you of several marvellous things that befell Perseus on his way homeward ; such as his killing a hideous sea-monster, just as it was on the point of devouring a beautiful maiden ; nor how he changed an enormous giant into a mountain of stone, merely by showing him the head of the Gorgon. If you doubt this latter story, you may make a voyage to Africa, some day or other, and see the very mountain, which is still known by the ancient giant's name.

Finally, our brave Perseus arrived at the island, where he expected to see his dear mother. But during his absence, the wicked king had treated Danae so very ill, that she was compelled to make her escape, and had taken refuge in a temple where some good old priests were extremely kind to her. These praiseworthy priests, and the kind-hearted fisherman, who had first shown hospitality to Danae and little Perseus when he found them afloat in the chest, seem to have been the only persons on the island who cared about doing right. All the rest of the people, as well as King Polydectes himself, were remarkably ill-behaved, and deserved no better destiny than that which was now to happen.

Not finding his mother at home, Perseus went straight to the palace, and was immediately ushered into the presence of the king. Polydectes was by no means rejoiced to see him, for he had felt almost certain in his own evil mind that the Gorgons would have torn the poor young man to pieces, and have eaten him up out of the way. However, seeing him safely returned, he put the best face he could upon the matter, and asked Perseus how he had succeeded.

"Have you performed your promise?" inquired he. "Have you brought me the head of Medusa with the snaky locks? If not, young man, it will cost you dear ; for I must

have a bridal present for the beautiful Princess Hippodamia, and there is nothing else that she would admire so much."

"Yes, please your Majesty," answered Perseus, in a quiet way, as if it were no very wonderful deed for such a young man as he to perform. "I have brought you the Gorgon's head, snaky locks and all!"

"Indeed! Pray, let me see it," quoth King Polydectes.

"It must be a very curious spectacle, if all that travellers tell about it be true!"

"Your Majesty is right," replied Perseus. "It is really an object that will be pretty certain to fix the regards of all who look at it. And if your Majesty think fit, I would suggest that a holiday be proclaimed, and that all your Majesty's subjects be summoned to behold this wonderful curiosity. Few of them, I imagine, have seen a Gorgon's head before, and perhaps never may again!"

The king well knew that his subjects were an idle set of reprobates, and very fond of sight-seeing, as idle persons usually are. So he took the young man's advice, and sent out heralds and messengers in all directions, to blow the trumpet at the street corners, and in the market-places, and wherever two roads met, and summon everybody to court. Thither, accordingly, came a great multitude of good-for-nothing vagabonds, all of whom, out of pure love of mischief, would have been glad if Perseus had met with some ill-hap, in his encounter with the Gorgons. If there were any better people in the island (as I really hope there may have been, although the story tells nothing about any such), they stayed quietly at home, minding their own business, and taking care of their little children. Most of the inhabitants, at all events, ran as fast as they could to the palace, and shoved, and pushed, and elbowed one another in their eagerness to get near a balcony, on which Perseus showed himself, holding the embroidered wallet in his hand.

On a platform, within full view of the balcony, sat the mighty King Polydectes amid his evil counsellors and with

his flattering courtiers in a semicircle round about him. Monarch, counsellors, courtiers, and subjects, all gazed eagerly towards Perseus.

"Show us the head! Show us the head!" shouted the people, and there was a fierceness in their cry, as if they would tear Perseus to pieces, unless he should satisfy them with what he had to show. "Show us the head of Medusa with the snaky locks!"

A feeling of sorrow and pity came over the youthful Perseus.

"Oh, King Polydectes," cried he, "and ye, many people, I am very loth to show you the Gorgon's head!"

"Ah, the villian and coward!" yelled the people, more fiercely than before. "He is making game of us! He has no Gorgon's head! Show us the head if you have it, or we will take your own head for a football!"

The evil counsellors whispered bad advice in the king's ear; the courtiers murmured with one consent that Perseus had shown disrespect to their royal lord and master; and the great King Polydectes himself waved his hand and ordered him, with the stern, deep voice of authority, on his peril to produce the head.

"Show me the Gorgon's head, or I will cut off your own!"

And Perseus sighed.

"This instant," repeated Polydectes, "or you die!"

"Behold it, then!" cried Perseus, in a voice like the blast of a trumpet.

And, suddenly holding up the head, not an eyelid had time to wink before the wicked King Polydectes, his evil counsellors, and all his fierce subjects, were no longer anything but the mere images of a monarch and his people. They were all fixed for ever in the look and attitude of that moment! At the first glimpse of the terrible head of Medusa, they whitened into marble! and Perseus thrust the head back into his wallet and went to tell his dear mother that she need no longer be afraid of the wicked King Polydectes.

THE MIRACULOUS PITCHER.

ONE evening, in times long ago, old Philemon and his old wife Baucis sat at their cottage-door, enjoying the calm and beautiful sunset. They had already eaten their frugal supper, and intended to spend a quiet hour or two before bed-time. So they talked together about their garden, and their cow, and their bees, and their grape-vines, which clambered over the cottage-wall and on which the grapes were beginning to turn purple. But the rude shouts of children and the fierce barking of dogs, in the village near at hand, grew louder and louder, until, at last, it was hardly possible for Baucis and Philemon to hear each other speak.

"Ah, wife," cried Philemon, "I fear some poor traveller is seeking hospitality among our neighbours yonder, and, instead of giving him food and lodging, they have set their dogs at him, as their custom is!"

"Well-a-day!" answered old Baucis, "I do wish our neighbours felt a little more kindness for their fellow-creatures. And only think of bringing up their children in this naughty way, and patting them on the head when they fling stones at strangers!"

"Those children will never come to any good," said Philemon, shaking his white head. "To tell you the truth, wife, I should not wonder if some terrible thing were to happen to all the people in the village, unless they mend their manners. But, as for you and me, so long as Providence affords us a crust of bread, let us be ready to give half to any poor homeless stranger that may come along and need it."

"That's right, husband!" said Baucis. "So we will!"

These old folks, you must know, were quite poor, and had to work pretty hard for a living. Old Philemon toiled diligently in his garden, while Baucis was always busy with her distaff, or making a little butter and cheese with their cow's milk, or doing one thing or another about the cottage. Their food was seldom anything but bread, milk, and vegetables, with sometimes a portion of honey from their beehive and now and then a bunch of grapes that had ripened against the cottage-wall. But they were two of the kindest old people in the world, and would cheerfully have gone without their dinners any day, rather than refuse a slice of their brown loaf, a cup of new milk, and a spoonful of honey, to the weary traveller who might pause before their door. They felt as if such guests had a sort of holiness, and that they ought, therefore, to treat them better and more bountifully than their own selves.

Their cottage stood on a rising ground, at some short distance from a village, which lay in a hollow valley that was about half a mile in breadth. This valley, in past ages, when the world was new, had probably been the bed of a lake. There fishes had glided to and fro in the depths, and water-weeds had grown along the margin, and trees and hills had seen their reflected images in the broad and peaceful mirror. But, as the waters subsided, men had cultivated the soil, and built houses on it, so that it was now a fertile spot, and bore no traces of the ancient lake, except a very small brook which meandered through the midst of the village, and supplied the inhabitants with water. The valley had been dry land so long that oaks had sprung up, and grown great and high, and perished with old age, and been succeeded by others, as tall and stately as the first. Never was there a prettier or more fruitful valley. The very sight of the plenty around them should have made the inhabitants kind and gentle, and ready to show their gratitude to Providence by doing good to their fellow-creatures.

But, we are sorry to say, the people of this lovely village were not worthy to dwell in a spot on which Heaven had smiled so beneficently. They were a very selfish and hard-hearted people, and had no pity for the poor, nor sympathy with the homeless. They would only have laughed had anybody told them that human beings owe a debt of love to one another, because there is no other method of paying the debt of love and care which all of us owe to Providence. You will hardly believe what I am going to tell you. These naughty people taught their children to be no better than themselves, and used "to clap their hands, by way of encouragement, when they saw the little boys and girls run after some poor stranger, shouting at his heels, and pelting him with stones. They kept large and fierce dogs, and whenever a traveller ventured to show himself in the village street, this pack of disagreeable curs scampered to meet him, barking, snarling, and showing their teeth. Then they would seize him by the leg, or by his clothes, just as it happened; and if he were ragged when he came, he was generally a pitiable object before he had time to run away. This was a very terrible thing to poor travellers, as you may suppose, especially when they chanced to be sick, or feeble, or lame, or old. Such persons (if they once knew how badly these unkind people, and their unkind children and curs, were in the habit of behaving) would go miles and miles out of their way, rather than try to pass through the village again.

What made the matter seem worse, if possible, was when rich persons came in their chariots, or riding on beautiful horses, with their servants in rich liveries attending on them, nobody could be more civil and obsequious than the inhabitants of the village. They would take off their hats, and make the humblest bows you ever saw. If the children were rude, they were pretty certain to get their ears boxed; and as for the dogs, if a single cur in the pack presumed to yelp, his master instantly beat him with a club, and tied him up without any supper. This would have been

all very well, only it proved that the villagers cared much about the money that a stranger had in his pocket, and nothing whatever for the human soul, which lives equally in the beggar and the prince.

So now you can understand why old Philemon spoke so sorrowfully, when he heard the shouts of the children and the barking of the dogs, at the farther extremity of the village street. There was a confused din, which lasted a good while, and seemed to pass quite through the breadth of the valley.

"I never heard the dogs so loud!" observed the good old man.

"Nor the children so rude!" answered his good old wife.

They sat shaking their heads, one to another, while the noise came nearer and nearer; until, at the foot of the little eminence on which their cottage stood, they saw two travellers approaching on foot. Close behind them came the fierce dogs, snarling at their very heels. A little farther off ran a crowd of children, who sent up shrill cries, and flung stones at the two strangers, with all their might. Once or twice the younger of the two men (he was a slender and very active figure) turned about, and drove back the dogs with a staff which he carried in his hand. His companion, who was a very tall person, walked calmly along, as if disdaining to notice either the naughty children, or the pack of curs, whose manners the children seemed to imitate.

Both of the travellers were very humbly clad, and looked as if they might not have money enough in their pockets to pay for a night's lodging. And this, I am afraid, was the reason why the villagers had allowed their children and dogs to treat them so rudely.

"Come, wife," said Philemon to Baucis, "let us go and meet these poor people. No doubt they feel almost too heavy-hearted to climb the hill."

"Go you and meet them," answered Baucis, "while I make

haste within doors, and see whether we can get them anything for supper. A comfortable bowl of bread and milk would do wonders towards raising their spirits."

Accordingly, she hastened to the cottage. Philemon, on his part, went forward, and extended his hand with so hospitable an aspect that there was no need of saying, what nevertheless he did say, in the heartiest tone imaginable:—

"Welcome, strangers! welcome!"

"Thank you!" replied the younger of the two, in a lively kind of way, notwithstanding his weariness and trouble. "This is quite another greeting than we have met with yonder in the village. Pray, why do you live in such a bad neighbourhood?"

"Ah!" observed old Philemon, with a quiet and benign smile, "Providence put me here, I hope, among other reasons, in order that I may make you what amends I can for the inhospitality of my neighbours."

"Well said, old father!" cried the traveller, laughing; "and, if the truth must be told, my companion and myself need some amends. Those children (the little rascals!) have bespattered us finely with their mud-balls; and one of the curs has torn my cloak, which was ragged enough already. But I took him across the muzzle with my staff; and I think you may have heard him yelp, even thus far off."

Philemon was glad to see him in such good spirits; nor, indeed, would you have fancied, by the traveller's look and manner that he was weary with a long day's journey, besides being disheartened by rough treatment at the end of it. He was dressed in rather an odd way, with a sort of cap on his head, the brim of which stuck out over both ears. Though it was a summer evening, he wore a cloak, which he kept wrapt closely about him, perhaps because his undergarments were shabby. Philemon perceived, too, that he had on a singular pair of shoes, but as it was now dusk, and as the old man's eyesight was none of the sharpest, he

could not precisely tell in what the strangeness consisted. One thing, certainly, seemed queer. The traveller was so wonderfully light and active, that it appeared as if his feet sometimes rose from the ground of their own accord, or could only be kept down by an effort.

"I used to be light-footed in my youth," said Philemon to the traveller. "But I always found my feet grow heavier towards nightfall."

"There is nothing like a good staff to help one along," answered the stranger, "and I happen to have an excellent one, as you see."

This staff, in fact, was the oddest-looking staff that Philemon had ever beheld. It was made of olive-wood, and had something like a little pair of wings near the top. Two snakes, carved in the wood, were represented as twining themselves about the staff, and were so very skilfully executed that old Philemon (whose eyes, you know, were getting rather dim) almost thought them alive, and that he could see them wriggling and twisting.

"A curious piece of work, sure enough!" said he. "A staff with wings! It would be an excellent kind of stick for a little boy to ride astride of!"

By this time Philemon and his two guests had reached the cottage door.

"Friends," said the old man, "sit down and rest yourselves here on this bench. My good wife Baucis has gone to see what you can have for supper. We are poor folks, but you shall be welcome to whatever we have in the cupboard."

The younger stranger threw himself carelessly on the bench letting his staff fall as he did so. And here happened something rather marvellous, though trifling enough, too. The staff seemed to get up from the ground of its own accord, and, spreading its little pair of wings, it half-hopped, half-flew, and leaned itself against the wall of the cottage. There it stood quite still, except that the snakes continued to

wriggle. But, in my private opinion, old Philemon's eyesight had been playing him tricks again. Before he could ask any questions, the elder stranger drew his attention from the wonderful staff by speaking to him.

"Was there not," asked the stranger, in a remarkable deep tone of voice, "a lake, in very ancient time, covering the spot where now stands yonder village?"

"Not in my day, friend," answered Philemon, "and yet I am an old man, as you see. There were always the fields and meadows, just as they are now, and the old trees, and the little stream murmuring through the midst of the valley. My father, nor his father before him, ever saw it otherwise, so far as I know, and doubtless it will still be the same when old Philemon shall be gone and forgotten!"

"That is more than can be safely foretold," observed the stranger; and there was something very stern in his deep voice. He shook his head, too, so that his dark and heavy curls were shaken with the movement. "Since the inhabitants of yonder village have forgotten the affections and sympathies of their nature, it were better that the lake should be rippling over their dwellings again!"

The traveller looked so stern that Philemon was really almost frightened; the more so, that, at his frown, the twilight seemed suddenly to grow darker, and that, when he shook his head, there was a roll as of thunder in the air.

But, in a moment afterwards, the stranger's face became so kindly and mild, that the old man quite forgot his terror. Nevertheless, he could not help feeling that this elder traveller must be no ordinary personage, although he happened now to be attired so humbly, and to be journeying on foot. Not that Philemon fancied him a prince in disguise or any character of that sort, but rather some exceedingly wise man, who went about the world in this poor garb, despising wealth and all worldly objects and seeking everywhere to add a mite to his wisdom. This idea appeared the more probable, because, when Philemon raised his eyes

to see the stranger's face, he seemed to see more thought there in one look than he could have studied out in a lifetime.

While Baucis was getting the supper, the travellers both began to talk very sociably with Philemon. The younger, indeed, was extremely loquacious, and made such shrewd and witty remarks that the good old man continually burst out a-laughing, and pronounced him the merriest fellow he had seen for many a day.

"Pray, my young friend," said he, as they grew familiar together, "what may I call your name?"

"Why, I am very nimble as you see," answered the traveller, "so, if you call me Quicksilver, the name will fit tolerably well."

"Quicksilver? Quicksilver?" repeated Philemon, looking in the traveller's face, to see if he were making fun of him. "It is a very odd name! and your companion there? has he as strange a one?"

"You must ask the thunder to tell it you!" replied Quicksilver, putting on a mysterious look. "No other voice is loud enough."

This remark, whether it were serious or in jest, might have caused Philemon to conceive a very great awe of the elder stranger, if, on venturing to gaze at him, he had not beheld so much beneficence in his visage. But, undoubtedly, here was the grandest figure that ever sat so humbly beside a cottage door. When the stranger conversed it was with gravity and in such a way that Philemon felt irresistibly moved to tell him everything which he had most at heart. This is always the feeling that people have when they meet with anyone wise enough to comprehend all their good and evil, and not to despise a tittle of it.

But Philemon, simple and kind-hearted old man that he was, had not many secrets to disclose. He talked, however, quite garrulously about the events of his past life, in the whole course of which he had never been a score of miles

from this very spot. His wife Baucis and himself had dwelt in the cottage from their youth upward, earning their bread by honest labour, always poor, but still contented. He told what excellent butter and cheese Baucis made, and how nice were the vegetables which he raised in his garden. He said, too, that because they loved one another so very much, it was the wish of both that death might not separate them, but that they should die, as they had lived, together.

As the stranger listened, a smile beamed over his countenance and made its expression as sweet as it was grand.

"You are a good old man," said he to Philemon, "and you have a good old wife to be your helpmate. It is fit that your wish be granted."

And it seemed to Philemon, just then, as if the sunset clouds threw up a bright flash from the west and kindled a sudden light in the sky.

Baucis had now got supper ready, and, coming to the door, began to make apologies for the poor fare which she was forced to set before her guests.

"Had we known you were coming," said she, "my good man and myself would have gone without a morsel, rather than you should lack a better supper. But I took the best part of to-day's milk to make cheese, and our last loaf is already half eaten. Ah me! I never feel the sorrow of being poor, save when a poor traveller knocks at our door."

"All will be very well; do not trouble yourself, my good dame," replied the elder stranger, kindly. "An honest, hearty welcome to a guest works miracles with the fare, and is capable of turning the coarsest food to nectar and ambrosia."

"A welcome you shall have," cried Baucis, "and likewise a little honey that we happen to have left, and a bunch of purple grapes besides."

"Why, mother Baucis, it is a feast!" exclaimed Quicksilver, laughing, "an absolute feast! and you shall see how

bravely I will play my part at it! I think I never felt hungrier in my life."

"Mercy on us!" whispered Baucis to her husband. "If the young man has such a terrible appetite, I am afraid there will not be half enough supper!"

They all went into the cottage.

And now, my little auditors, shall I tell you something that will make you open your eyes very wide? It is really one of the oddest circumstances in the whole story. Quicksilver's staff, you recollect, had set itself up against the wall of the cottage. Well, when its master entered the door, leaving this wonderful staff behind, what should it do but immediately spread its little wings, and go hopping and fluttering up the door steps! Tap, tap, went the staff on the kitchen floor, nor did it rest until it had stood itself on end, with the greatest gravity and decorum, beside Quicksilver's chair. Old Philemon, however, as well as his wife, was so taken up in attending to their guests, that no notice was given to what the staff had been about.

As Baucis had said, there was but a scanty supper for two hungry travellers. In the middle of the table was the remnant of a brown loaf, with a piece of cheese on one side of it and a dish of honeycomb on the other. There was a pretty good bunch of grapes for each of the guests. A moderately sized earthen pitcher, nearly full of milk, stood at a corner of the board, and when Baucis had filled two bowls, and set them before the strangers, only a little milk remained at the bottom of the pitcher. Alas! it is a very sad business when a bountiful heart finds itself pinched and squeezed among narrow circumstances. Poor Baucis kept wishing that she might starve for a week to come if it were possible by so doing to provide these hungry folks a more plentiful supper.

And, since the supper was so exceedingly small, she could not help wishing that their appetites had not been quite so large. Why, at their first sitting down, the travellers both drank off all the milk in their two bowls at a draught.

"A little more milk, kind Mother Baucis, if you please," said Quicksilver. "The day has been hot, and I am very much athirst."

"Now, my dear people," answered Baucis in great confusion, "I am so sorry and ashamed! But the truth is, there is hardly a drop more milk in the pitcher. Oh husband! husband! why didn't we go without our supper."

"Why, it appears to me," cried Quicksilver, starting up from the table and taking the pitcher by the handle, "it really appears to me that matters are not quite so bad as you represent them. Here is certainly more milk in the pitcher."

So saying, and to the vast astonishment of Baucis, he proceeded to fill, not only his own bowl, but his companion's likewise, from the pitcher that was supposed to be almost empty. The good woman could scarcely believe her eyes. She had certainly poured out nearly all the milk, and had peeped in afterwards, and seen the bottom of the pitcher as she set it down upon the table.

"But I am old," thought Baucis to herself, "and apt to be forgetful. I suppose I must have made a mistake. At all events, the pitcher cannot help being empty now after filling the bowls twice over."

"What excellent milk!" observed Quicksilver, after quaffing the contents of the second bowl. "Excuse me, my kind hostess, but I must really ask you for a little more."

Now Baucis had seen, as plainly as she could see anything, that Quicksilver had turned the pitcher upside down, and consequently had poured out every drop of milk in filling the last bowl. Of course there could not possibly be any left. However, in order to let him know precisely how the case was, she lifted the pitcher, and made a gesture as if pouring milk into Quicksilver's bowl, but without the remotest idea that any milk would stream forth. What was her surprise, therefore, when such an abundant cascade fell bubbling into the bowl, that it was immediately filled to the



"There is hardly a drop more milk in the pitcher," said Baucis.

brim, and overflowed upon the table ! The two snakes that were twisted about Quicksilver's staff (but neither Baucis nor Philemon happened to observe this circumstance) stretched out their heads, and began to lap up the spilt milk.

And then what a delicious fragrance the milk had ! It seemed as if Philemon's only cow must have pastured, that day, on the richest herbage that could be found anywhere in the world. I only wish that each of you, my beloved little souls, could have a bowl of such nice milk at supper-time !

"And now a slice of your brown loaf, Mother Baucis," said Quicksilver, "and a little of that honey !"

Baucis cut him a slice, accordingly, and although the loaf, when she and her husband ate of it, had been rather too dry and crusty to be palatable, it was now as light and moist as if but a few hours out of the oven. Tasting a crumb, which had fallen on the table, she found it more delicious than bread ever was before, and could hardly believe that it was a loaf of her own kneading and baking. Yet, what other loaf could it possibly be ?

But, oh, the honey ! I may just as well let it alone, without trying to describe how exquisitely it smelt and looked.

Its colour was that of the purest and most transparent gold ; and it had the odour of a thousand flowers ; but of such flowers as never grew in an earthly garden, and to seek which the bees must have flown high above the clouds. The wonder is, that, after alighting on a flower-bed of so delicious fragrance and immortal bloom, they should have been content to fly down again to their hive in Philemon's garden. Never was such honey tasted, seen, or smelt. The perfume floated around the kitchen, and made it so delightful that, had you closed your eyes, you would instantly have forgotten the low ceiling and smoky walls, and have fancied yourself in an arbour with celestial honeysuckle creeping over it.

Although good Mother Baucis was a simple old dame,

she could not but think that there was something rather out of the common way in all that had been going on. So, after helping the guests to bread and honey, and laying a bunch of grapes by each of their plates, she sat down by Philemon and told him what she had seen in a whisper.

"Did you ever hear the like?" asked she.

"No, I never did," answered Philemon, with a smile. "And I rather think, my dear old wife, you have been walking about in a sort of dream. If I had poured out the milk, I should have seen through the business at once. There happened to be a little more in the pitcher than you thought, that is all."

"Ah, husband," said Baucis, "say what you will, these are very uncommon people."

"Well, well," replied Philemon, still smiling, "perhaps they are. They certainly do look as if they had seen better days; and I am heartily glad to see them making so comfortable a supper."

Each of the guests had now taken his bunch of grapes upon his plate. Baucis (who rubbed her eyes, in order to see the more clearly) was of opinion that the clusters had grown larger and richer, and that each separate grape seemed to be on the point of bursting with ripe juice. It was entirely a mystery to her how such grapes could ever have been produced from the old stunted vine that climbed against the cottage wall.

"Very admirable grapes, these!" observed Quicksilver, as he swallowed one after another, without apparently diminishing his cluster. "Pray, my good host, whence did you gather them?"

"From my own vine," answered Philemon. "You may see one of its branches twisting across the window, yonder. But wife and I never thought the grapes very fine ones."

"I never tasted better," said the guest. "Another cup of this delicious milk, if you please, and I shall then have supped better than a prince."

This time, old Philemon bestirred himself, and took up the pitcher, for he was curious to discover whether there was any reality in the marvels which Baucis had whispered to him. He knew that his good old wife was incapable of falsehood, and that she was seldom mistaken in what she supposed to be true; but this was so very singular a case that he wanted to see into it with his own eyes. On taking up the pitcher, therefore, he slyly peeped into it, and was fully satisfied that it contained not so much as a single drop. All at once, however, he beheld a little white fountain, which gushed up from the bottom of the pitcher and speedily filled it to the brim with foaming and deliciously fragrant milk. It is lucky that Philemon, in his surprise, did not drop the miraculous pitcher from his hand.

"Who are ye, wonder-working strangers?" cried he, even more bewildered than his wife had been.

"Your guests, my good Philemon, and your friends," replied the elder traveller, in his mild deep voice, that had something at once sweet and awe-inspiring in it. "Give me likewise a cup of the milk, and may your pitcher never be empty for kind Baucis and yourself, any more than for the needy wayfarer!"

The supper being now over, the strangers requested to be shown to their place of repose. The old people would gladly have talked with them a little longer, and have expressed the wonder which they felt and their delight at finding the poor and meagre supper prove so much better and more abundant than they hoped. But the elder traveller had inspired them with such reverence, that they dared not ask him any questions. And when Philemon drew Quicksilver aside, and inquired how under the sun a fountain of milk could have got into an old earthen pitcher, this latter personage pointed to his staff.

"There is the whole mystery of the affair," quoth Quicksilver, "and if you can make it out, I'll thank you to let me know. I can't tell what to make of my staff. It is always

playing such odd tricks as this, sometimes getting me a supper, and quite as often stealing it away. If I had any faith in such nonsense, I should say the stick was bewitched!"

He said no more, but looked so slyly in their faces that they rather fancied he was laughing at them. The magic staff went hopping at his heels, as Quicksilver quitted the room. When left alone, the good old couple spent some little time in conversation about the events of the evening, and then lay down on the floor and fell fast asleep. They had given up their sleeping-room to the guests, and had no other bed for themselves save these planks, which I wish had been as soft as their own hearts.

The old man and his wife were stirring betimes in the morning, and the strangers likewise arose with the sun, and made their preparations to depart.

Philemon hospitably entreated them to remain a little longer, until Baucis could milk the cow, and bake a cake upon the hearth, and, perhaps, find them a few fresh eggs for breakfast. The guests, however, seemed to think it better to accomplish a good part of their journey before the heat of the day should come on.

They therefore persisted in setting out immediately, but asked Philemon and Baucis to walk forth with them a short distance, and show them the road which they were to take.

So they all four issued from the cottage, chatting together like old friends. It was very remarkable indeed, how familiar the old couple insensibly grew with the elder traveller, and how their good and simple spirits melted into his, even as two drops of water would melt into the illimitable ocean. And as for Quicksilver, with his keen, quick, laughing wits, he appeared to discover every little thought that but peeped into their minds before they suspected it themselves. They sometimes wished, it is true, that he had not been quite so quick-witted, and also that he would fling away his staff, which looked so mysteriously mischievous

with the snakes always writhing about it. But then, again, Quicksilver showed himself so very good-humoured, that they would have been rejoiced to keep him in their cottage, staff, snakes, and all, every day, and the whole day long.

"Ah, me! Well-a-day!" exclaimed Philemon, when they had walked a little way from their door, "if our neighbours only knew what a blessed thing it is to show hospitality to strangers, they would tie up all their dogs, and never allow their children to fling another stone."

"It is a sin and shame for them to behave so—that it is!" cried good old Baucis vehemently. "And I mean to go this very day and tell some of them what naughty people they are!"

"I fear," remarked Quicksilver, slyly smiling, "that you will find none of them at home."

The elder traveller's brow, just then, assumed such a grave, stern, and awful grandeur, yet serene withal, that neither Baucis nor Philemon dared to speak a word. They gazed reverently into his face, as if they had been gazing at the sky.

"When men do not feel towards the humblest stranger as if he were a brother," said the traveller, in tones so deep that they sounded like those of an organ, "they are unworthy to exist on earth, which was created as the abode of a great human brotherhood!"

"And, by-the-by, my dear old people," cried Quicksilver, with the liveliest look of fun and mischief in his eyes, "where is this same village that you talk about? On which side of us does it lie? Methinks I do not see it hereabouts."

Philemon and his wife turned towards the valley, where, at sunset, only the day before, they had seen the meadows, the houses, the gardens, the clumps of trees, the wide, green-margined street, with children playing in it, and all the tokens of business, enjoyment, and prosperity. But what was their astonishment! There was no longer any

appearance of a village! Even the fertile vale, in the hollow of which it lay, had ceased to have existence. In its stead they beheld the broad blue surface of a lake, which filled the great basin of the valley from brim to brim and reflected the surrounding hills on its bosom, with as tranquil an image as if it had been there ever since the creation of the world. For an instant the lake remained perfectly smooth. Then a little breeze sprang up, and caused the water to dance, glitter, and sparkle in the early sunbeams, and to dash, with a pleasant rippling murmur, against the hither shore.

The lake seemed so strangely familiar that the old couple were greatly perplexed, and felt as if they could only have been dreaming about a village having lain there. But the next moment they remembered the vanished dwellings, and the faces and characters of the inhabitants far too distinctly for a dream. The village had been there yesterday, and now was gone!

"Alas!" cried these kind-hearted old people, "what has become of our poor neighbours?"

"They exist no longer as men and women," said the elder traveller, in his grand and deep voice, while a roll of thunder seemed to echo it at a distance. "There was neither use nor beauty in such a life as theirs, for they never softened or sweetened the hard lot of mortality by the exercise of kindly affections between man and man. They retained no image of the better life in their bosoms; therefore the lake, that was of old, has spread itself forth again to reflect the sky!"

"And as for those foolish people," said Quicksilver, with his mischievous smile, "they are all transformed to fishes. There needed but little change, for they were already a scaly set of rascals, and the coldest-blooded beings in existence. So, kind Mother Baucis, whenever you or your husband have an appetite for a dish of broiled trout, he can throw in a line and pull out half a dozen of your old neighbours!"

"Ah" cried Baucis, shuddering, "I would not, for the world, put one of them on the gridiron!"

"No," added Philemon, making a wry face, "we could never relish them!"

"As for you, good Philemon," continued the elder traveller, "and you, kind Baucis,—you, with your scanty means, have mingled so much heartfelt hospitality with your entertainment of the homeless stranger, that the milk became an inexhaustible fount of nectar, and the brown loaf and the honey were ambrosia. Thus, the divinities have feasted, at your board, off the same viands that supply their banquets on Olympus. You have done well, my dear old friends. Wherefore, request whatever favour you have most at heart, and it is granted."

Philemon and Baucis looked at one another, and then—I know not which of the two it was who spoke, but that one uttered the desire of both their hearts.

"Let us live together, while we live, and leave the world at the same time, when we die! For we have always loved one another!"

"Be it so!" replied the stranger, with majestic kindness. "Now, look towards your cottage!"

They did so. But what was their surprise on beholding a tall edifice of white marble, with a wide-open portal, occupying the spot where their humble residence had so lately stood!

"There is your home," said the stranger, beneficently smiling on them both. "Exercise your hospitality in yonder palace, as freely as in the poor hovel to which you welcomed us last evening."

The old folks fell on their knees to thank him; but, behold! neither he nor Quicksilver was there.

So Philemon and Baucis took up their residence in the marble palace, and spent their time, with vast satisfaction to themselves, in making everybody jolly and comfortable who happened to pass that way. The milk-pitcher, I must not



"There is your home," said the stranger.

forget to say, retained its marvellous quality of being never empty when it was desirable to have it full. Whenever an honest, good-humoured, and free-hearted guest took a draught from this pitcher, he invariably found it the sweetest and most invigorating fluid that ever ran down his throat. But if a cross and disagreeable curmudgeon happened to sip, he was pretty certain to twist his visage into a hard knot, and pronounce it a pitcher of sour milk!

Thus the old couple lived in their palace, a great, great while, and grew older and older, and very old indeed. At length, however, there came a summer morning when Philemon and Baucis failed to make their appearance, as on other mornings, with one hospitable smile overspreading both their pleasant faces, to invite the guests of over-night to breakfast. The guests searched everywhere, from top to bottom of the spacious palace, and all to no purpose. But, after a great deal of perplexity, they espied, in front of the portal, two venerable trees which nobody could remember to have seen there the day before. Yet there they stood with their roots fastened deep into the soil, and a huge breadth of foliage overshadowing the whole front of the edifice. One was an oak and the other a linden-tree. Their boughs—it was strange and beautiful to see—were intertwined together, and embraced one another, so that each tree seemed to live in the other tree's bosom, much more than in its own.

While the guests were marvelling how these trees, that must have required at least a century to grow, could have come to be so tall and venerable in a single night, a breeze sprang up, and set their intermingled boughs astir. And then there was a deep, broad murmur in the air, as if the two mysterious trees were speaking.

"I am old Philemon!" murmured the oak.

"I am old Baucis!" murmured the linden-tree.

But, as the breeze grew stronger, the trees both spoke at once—"Philemon! Baucis! Baucis! Philemon!"—as if

one were both, and both were one, and talking together in the depths of their mutual heart. It was plain enough to perceive that the good old couple had renewed their age, and were now to spend a quiet and delightful hundred years or so, Philemon as an oak, and Baucis as a linden-tree. And oh, what a hospitable shade did they fling around them ! Whenever a wayfarer paused beneath it, he heard a pleasant whisper of the leaves above his head, and wondered how the sound should so much resemble words like these :—

“Welcome, welcome, dear traveller ! welcome !”

And some kind soul, that knew what would have pleased old Baucis and old Philemon best, built a circular seat around both their trunks, where, for a great while afterwards, the weary, and the hungry, and the thirsty, used to repose themselves, and quaff milk abundantly out of the miraculous pitcher.

And I wish, for all our sakes, that we had the pitcher here now !

THE PYGMIES.

A GREAT while ago, when the world was full of wonders, there lived an earth-born Giant named Antaeus, and a million or more of curious little earth-born people, who were called Pygmies. This Giant and these Pygmies being children of the same mother (that is to say, our good old Grandmother Earth), were all brethren, and dwelt together in a very friendly and affectionate manner, far far off, in the middle of hot Africa. The Pygmies were so small and there were so many sandy deserts and such huge mountains between them and the rest of mankind, that nobody could get a peep at them oftener than once in a hundred years. As for the Giant, being of a very lofty stature, it was easy enough to see him, but safest to keep out of his sight.

Among the Pygmies, I suppose, if one of them grew to the height of six or eight inches, he was reckoned a prodigiously tall man. It must have been very pretty to behold their little cities, with streets two or three feet wide, paved with the smallest pebbles, and bordered by habitations about as big as a squirrel's cage. The king's palace attained to the stupendous magnitude of a doll's house, and stood in the centre of a spacious square, which could hardly have been covered by our hearth-rug. Their principal temple, or cathedral, was as lofty as yonder bureau, and was looked upon as a wonderfully sublime and magnificent edifice. All these structures were built neither of stone nor wood. They were neatly plastered together by the Pygmy workmen, pretty much like birds' nests, out of straw, feathers, eggshells, and other small bits of stuff, with stiff clay instead

of mortar, and when the hot sun had dried them, they were just as snug and comfortable as a Pygmy could desire.

The country round about was conveniently laid out in fields, the largest of which was nearly of the same extent as one of Sweet Fern's flower-beds. Here the Pygmies used to plant wheat and other kinds of grain, which, when it grew up and ripened, overshadowed these tiny people as the pines and the oaks and the walnut and chestnut trees overshadow you and me when we walk in our own tracts of woodland. At harvest time they were forced to go with their little axes and cut down the grain, exactly as a wood-cutter makes a clearing in the forest, and when a stalk of wheat, with its overburdened top chanced to come crashing down upon an unfortunate Pygmy, it was apt to be a very sad affair. If it did not smash him all to pieces, at least, I am sure, it must have made the poor little fellow's head ache. And if the fathers and mothers were so small, what must the children and babies have been? A whole family of them might have been put to bed in a shoe or have crept into an old glove, and played at hide-and-seek in its thumb and fingers. You might have hidden a year-old baby under a thimble.

Now these funny Pygmies, as I told you before, had a Giant for their neighbour and brother. He was so very tall that he carried a pine-tree, which was eight feet through the butt, for a walking-stick. It took a far-sighted Pygmy, I can assure you, to discern his summit without the help of a telescope, and sometimes, in misty weather, they could not see his upper half, but only his long legs, which seemed to be striding about by themselves. But at noonday, in a clear atmosphere, when the sun shone brightly over him the Giant Antaeus presented a very grand spectacle. There he used to stand a perfect mountain of a man with his great countenance smiling down upon his little brothers, and his one vast eye (which was as big as a cart-wheel, and placed

right in the centre of his forehead) giving a friendly wink to the whole nation at once.

The Pygmies loved to talk with Antaeus, and fifty times a day one or another of them would turn up his head and shout through the hollow of his fists, "Halloo, brother Antaeus! How are you, my good fellow?" And when the small, distant squeak of their voices reached his ear, the Giant would make answer, "Pretty well, brother Pygmy, I thank you!" in a thunderous roar that would have shaken down the walls of their strongest temple, only that it came from so far aloft.

It was a happy circumstance that Antaeus was the Pygmy peoples' friend, for there was more strength in his little finger than in ten million of such bodies as theirs. If he had been as ill-natured to them as he was to everybody else, he might have beaten down their biggest city at one kick and hardly have known that he did it. With the tornado of his breath, he could have stripped the roofs from a hundred dwellings, and sent thousands of the inhabitants whirling through the air. He might have set his immense foot upon a multitude, and when he took it up again, there would have been a pitiful sight to be sure. But being the son of Mother Earth, as they likewise were, the Giant gave them his brotherly kindness, and loved them with as big a love as it was possible to feel for creatures so very small. And, on their parts, the Pygmies loved Antaeus with as much affection as their tiny hearts could hold. He was always ready to do them any good offices that lay in his power; as, for example, when they wanted a breeze to turn their wind-mills, the Giant would set all the sails a-going with the mere natural respiration of his lungs. When the sun was too hot, he often sat himself down, and let his shadow fall over the kingdom, from one frontier to the other; and as for matters in general, he was wise enough to let them alone, and leave the Pygmies to manage their own affairs which, after all, is about the best thing that great people can do for little ones.

In short, as I said before, Antaeus loved the Pygmies, and the Pygmies loved Antaeus. The Giant's life being as long as his body was large, while the lifetime of a Pygmy is but a span, this friendly intercourse had been going on for innumerable generations and ages. It was written about in the Pygmy histories and talked about in their ancient traditions. The most venerable and white-bearded Pygmy had never heard of a time, even in his greatest of grandfather's days when the Giant was not their enormous friend. Once to be sure (as was recorded on an obelisk, three feet high, erected on the place of the catastrophe), Antaeus sat down upon about five thousand Pygmies, who were assembled at a military review. But this was one of those unlucky accidents for which nobody is to blame, so that the small folks never took it to heart, and only requested the Giant to be careful for ever afterwards to examine the acre of ground where he intended to squat himself.

It is a very pleasant picture to imagine Antaeus standing among the Pygmies, like the spire of the tallest cathedral that ever was built, while they ran about like ants at his feet, and to think that, in spite of their difference in size, there were affection and sympathy between them and him! Indeed, it has always seemed to me that the Giant needed the little people more than the Pygmies needed the Giant. For, unless they had been his neighbours and well-wishers, and, as we may say, his playfellows, Antaeus would not have had a single friend in the world. No other being like himself had ever been created. No creature of his own size had ever talked with him, in thunder-like accents face to face. When he stood with his head among the clouds, he was quite alone, and had been so for hundreds of years, and would be so for ever. Even if he had met another Giant Antaeus would have fancied the world not big enough for two such vast personages, and, instead of being friends with him, would have fought him till one of the two was killed. But with the Pygmies he was the most sportive

and humorous, and merry-hearted, and sweet-tempered old Giant that ever washed his face in a wet cloud.

His little friends, like all other small people, had a great opinion of their own importance, and used to assume quite a patronizing air towards the Giant.

"Poor creature!" they said one to another. "He has a very dull time of it, all by himself, and we ought not to grudge wasting a little of our precious time to amuse him. He is not half so bright as we are, to be sure; and, for that reason, he needs us to look after his comfort and happiness. Let us be kind to the old fellow. Why, if Mother Earth had not been very kind to ourselves, we might all have been Giants too."

On all their holidays the Pygmies had excellent sport with Antaeus. He often stretched himself out at full length on the ground, where he looked like the long ridge of a hill, and it was a good hour's walk, no doubt for a short-legged Pygmy, to journey from head to foot of the Giant. He would lay down his great hand flat on the grass, and challenge the tallest of them to clamber upon it, and straddle from finger to finger. So fearless were they, that they made nothing of creeping in among the folds of his garments. When his head lay sidewise on the earth, they would march boldly up, and peep into the great cavern of his mouth, and take it all as a joke (as indeed it was meant) when Antaeus gave a sudden snap with his jaws, as if he were going to swallow fifty of them at once. You would have laughed to see the children dodging in and out among his hair or swinging from his beard. It is impossible to tell half of the funny tricks that they played with their huge comrade; but I do not know that anything was more curious than when a party of boys were seen running races on his forehead, to try which of them could get first round the circle of his one great eye. It was another favourite feat with them to march along the bridge of his nose, and jump down upon his upper lip.

If the truth must be told, they were sometimes as troublesome to the Giant as a swarm of ants or mosquitoes, especially as they had a fondness for mischief, and liked to prick his skin with their little swords and lances, to see how thick and tough it was. But Antaeus took it all kindly enough; although once in a while, when he happened to be sleepy, he would grumble out a peevish word or two, like the muttering of a tempest, and ask them to have done with their nonsense. A great deal oftener, however, he watched their merriment and gambols until his huge, heavy, clumsy wits were completely stirred up by them, and then would he roar out such a tremendous volume of immeasurable laughter, that the whole nation of Pygmies had to put their hands to their ears, else it would certainly have deafened them.

"Ho! ho! ho!" quoth the giant, shaking his mountainous sides. "What a funny thing it is to be little! If I were not Antaeus, I should like to be a Pygmy, just for the joke's sake."

The Pygmies had but one thing to trouble them in the world. They were constantly at war with the cranes, and had always been so, ever since the long-lived Giant could remember. From time to time very terrible battles had been fought, in which sometimes the little men won the victory, and sometimes the cranes. According to some historians, the Pygmies used to go to the battle mounted on the backs of goats and rams; but such animals as these must have been far too big for Pygmies to ride upon; so that, I rather suppose, they rode on squirrel-back, or rabbit-back, or rat-back, or perhaps got upon hedge-hogs, whose prickly quills would be very terrible to the enemy. However this might be, and whatever creatures the Pygmies rode upon, I do not doubt that they made a formidable appearance armed with sword and spear, and bow and arrow, blowing their tiny trumpet and shouting their little war-cry. They never failed to exhort one another to fight bravely, and recollect that the world had its eyes upon

them, although, in simple truth, the only spectator was the Giant Antaeus, with his one great stupid eye in the middle of his forehead.

When the two armies joined battle, the cranes would rush forward, flapping their wings and stretching out their necks, and would perhaps snatch up some of the Pygmies cross-wise in their beaks. Whenever this happened, it was truly an awful spectacle to see those little men of might, kicking and sprawling in the air, and at last disappearing down the crane's long crooked throat, swallowed up alive. A hero, you know, must hold himself in readiness for any kind of fate; and doubtless the glory of the thing was a consolation to him, even in the crane's gizzard. If Antaeus observed that the battle was going hard against his little allies, he generally stopped laughing, and ran with mile-long strides to their assistance, flourishing his club aloft and shouting at the cranes, who quacked and croaked, and retreated as fast as they could. Then the Pygmy army would march homeward in triumph, attributing the victory entirely to their own valour, and to the war-like skill and strategy of whomsoever happened to be captain-general.

In the above-described warfare, if a Pygmy chanced to pluck out a crane's tail-feather, it proved a very great feather in his cap. Once or twice, if you will believe me, a little man was made chief ruler of the nation for no other merit in the world than bringing home such a feather.

But I have now said enough to let you see what a gallant little people these were, and how happily they and their forefathers, for nobody knows how many generations, had lived with the immeasurable Giant Antaeus. In the remaining part of the story I shall tell you of a far more astonishing battle than any that was fought between the Pygmies and the cranes.

One day the mighty Antaeus was lolling at full length among his little friends. His pine-tree walking-stick lay on the ground close by his side. His head was in one part

of the kingdom, and his feet extended across the boundaries of another part; and he was taking whatever comfort he could get, while the Pygmies scrambled over him and peeped into his cavernous mouth and played among his hair. Sometimes, for a minute or two, the Giant dropped asleep, and snored like the rush of a whirlwind. During one of these little bits of slumber a Pygmy chanced to climb upon his shoulder, and took a view around the horizon, as from the summit of a hill, and he beheld something a long way off which made him rub the bright specks of his eyes, and look sharper than before. At first he mistook it for a mountain, and wondered how it had grown up so suddenly out of the earth. But soon he saw the mountain move. As it came nearer and nearer, what should it turn out to be but a human shape, not so big as Antaeus, it is true, although a very enormous figure in comparison with Pygmies, and a vast deal bigger than the men whom we see nowadays.

When the Pygmy was quite satisfied that his eyes had not deceived him, he scampered, as fast as his legs would carry him, to the Giant's ear, and stooping over its cavity, shouted lustily into it: "Halloo, brother Antaeus! Get up this minute, and take your pine-tree walking-stick in your hand. Here comes another Giant to have a tussle with you."

"Poh, Poh!" grumbled Antaeus, only half-awake. "None of your nonsense, my little fellow! Don't you see I'm sleepy? There is not a Giant on earth for whom I would take the trouble to get up."

But the Pygmy looked again, and now perceived that the stranger was coming directly towards the prostrate form of Antaeus. With every step he looked less like a blue mountain, and more like an immensely large man. He was soon so nigh that there could be no possible mistake about the matter. There he was, with the sun flaming on his golden helmet, and flashing from his polished breastplate; he had a sword by his side, and a lion's skin over his back, and on

his right shoulder he carried a club, which looked bulkier and heavier than the pine-tree walking-stick of Antaeus.

By this time the whole nation of Pygmies had seen the new wonder, and a million of them set up a shout, all together, so that it really made quite an audible squeak.

"Get up, Antaeus! Bestir yourself, you lazy old Giant! Here comes another Giant, as strong as you are, to fight with you."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" growled the sleepy Giant. "I'll have my nap out, come who may."

Still the stranger drew nearer, and now the Pygmies could plainly discern that, if his stature were less lofty than the Giant's, yet his shoulders were even broader. And, in truth, what a pair of shoulders they must have been! As I told you, a long while ago, they once upheld the sky. The Pygmies, being ten times as vivacious as their great numbskull of a brother, could not abide the Giant's slow movements; and were determined to have him on his feet. So they kept shouting to him, and even went so far as to prick him with their swords.

"Get up, get up!" they cried. "Up with you, lazy bones! The strange Giant's club is bigger than your own, his shoulders are broader, and we think him the stronger of the two."

Antaeus could not endure to have it said that any mortal was half so mighty as himself. This latter remark of the Pygmies pricked him deeper than their swords; and, sitting up, in rather sulky humour, he gave a gape of several yards wide, rubbed his eye, and finally turned his stupid head in the direction whither his little friends were eagerly pointing.

No sooner did he set eye on the stranger than, leaping on his feet, and seizing his walking-stick, he strode a mile or two to meet him, all the while brandishing the sturdy pine-tree, so that it whistled through the air.

"Who are you?" thundered the Giant. "And what do you want in my dominions?"

There was one strange thing about Antaeus, of which I have not yet told you, lest, hearing of so many wonders all in a lump, you might not believe much more than half of them. You are to know, then, that whenever this redoubtable Giant touched the ground, either with his hand, his foot, or any other part of his body, he grew stronger than ever he had been before. The Earth, you remember, was his mother, and was very fond of him, as being almost the biggest of her children, and so she took this method of keeping him always in full vigour. Some persons affirm that he grew ten times stronger at every touch; others say that it was only twice as strong. But only think of it! Whenever Antaeus took a walk, supposing it were but ten miles, and that he stepped a hundred yards at a stride, you may try to cipher out how much mightier he was on sitting down again than when he first started. And whenever he flung himself on the earth to take a little repose, even if he got up the very next instant he would be as strong as exactly ten just such Giants as his former self. It was well for the world that Antaeus happened to be of a sluggish disposition, and liked ease better than exercise, for, if he had frisked about like the Pygmies, and touched the earth as often as they did, he would long ago have been strong enough to pull down the sky about people's ears. But these great lubberly fellows resemble mountains, not only in bulk, but in their disinclination to move.

Any other mortal man, except the very one whom Antaeus had now encountered, would have been half frightened to death by the Giant's ferocious aspect and terrible voice. But the stranger did not seem at all disturbed. He carelessly lifted his club, and balanced it in his hand, measuring Antaeus with his eye, from head to foot, not as if wonder-smitten at his stature, but as if he had seen a great many Giants before, and this was by no means the biggest of them. In fact, if the Giant had been no bigger than the Pygmies (who stood pricking up their ears, and looking and listening to what was

going forward), the stranger could not have been less afraid of him.

"Who are you, I say?" roared Antaeus again. "What's your name? Why do you come hither? Speak, you vagabond, or I'll try the thickness of your skull with my walking-stick!"

"You are a very discourteous Giant," answered the stranger quietly, "and I shall probably have to teach you a little civility before we part. As for my name, it is Hercules. I have come hither because this is my most convenient road to the garden of the Hesperides, whither I am going to get three of the golden apples for King Eurystheus."

"Caitiff, you shall go no farther!" bellowed Antaeus, putting on a grimmer look than before; for he had heard of the mighty Hercules, and hated him because he was said to be so strong. "Neither shall you go back whence you came!"

"How will you prevent me," asked Hercules, "from going whether I please?"

"By hitting you a rap with this pine-tree here," shouted Antaeus, scowling so that he made himself the ugliest monster in Africa. "I am fifty times stronger than you; and, now that I stamp my foot upon the ground, I am five hundred times stronger! I am ashamed to kill such a puny little dwarf as you seem to be. I will make a slave of you, and you shall likewise be the slave of my brethren here, the Pygmies. So throw down your club and your other weapons, and as for that lion's skin, I intend to have a pair of gloves made of it."

"Come and take it off my shoulders, then," answered Hercules, lifting his club.

Then the Giant, grinning with rage, strode tower-like towards the stranger (ten times strengthened at every step), and fetched a monstrous blow at him with his pine-tree, which Hercules caught upon his club, and being more skilful than Antaeus, he paid him back such a rap upon the scone,

that down tumbled the great lumbering man-mountain, flat upon the ground. The poor little Pygmies, (who really never dreamed that anybody in the world was half so strong as their brother Antæus) were a good deal dismayed at this. But no sooner was the Giant down than up he bounced again, with tenfold might, and such a furious visage as was horrible to behold. He aimed another blow at Hercules, but struck awry, being blinded with wrath, and only hit his poor innocent Mother Earth who groaned and trembled at the stroke. His pine-tree went so deep into the ground, and stuck there so fast, that before Antæus could get it out, Hercules brought down his club across his shoulders with a mighty thwack, which made the Giant roar as if all sorts of intolerable noises had come screeching and rumbling out of his immeasurable lungs in that one cry. Away it went, over mountains and valleys, and for aught I know, was heard on the other side of the African deserts.

As for the Pygmies, their capital city was laid in ruins by the concussion and vibration of the air, and, though there was uproar enough without their help, they all set up a shriek out of three millions of little throats, fancying, no doubt, that they swelled the Giant's bellow by at least ten times as much. Meanwhile, Antæus had scrambled upon his feet again, and pulled his pine-tree out of the earth, and all aflame with fury, and more outrageously strong than ever, he ran at Hercules, and brought down another blow.

"This time, rascal," shouted he, "you shall not escape me!"

But once more Hercules warded off the stroke with his club and the giant's pine-tree was shattered into a thousand splinters, most of which flew among the Pygmies, and did them more mischief than I like to think about. Before Antæus could get out of the way, Hercules let drive again, and gave him another knock-down blow, which sent him heels over head, but served only to increase his already enormous and insufferable strength. As for his rage, there

is no telling what a fiery furnace it had now got to be. His one eye was nothing but a circle of red flame. Having now no weapons but his fists, he doubled them up (each bigger than a hogshead), smote one against the other, and danced up and down with absolute frenzy, flourishing his immense arms about, as if he meant not merely to kill Hercules, but to smash the whole world to pieces.

"Come on!" roared this thundering Giant. "Let me hit you but one box on the ear, and you'll never have the headache again!"

Now Hercules (though strong enough, as you already know, to hold the sky up) began to be sensible that he should never win the victory if he kept on knocking Antaeus down, for, by-and-by, if he hit him such hard blows, the Giant would inevitably, by the help of his Mother Earth, become stronger than the mighty Hercules himself. So throwing down his club, with which he had fought so many dreadful battles, the hero stood ready to receive his antagonist with naked arms.

"Step forward," cried he. "Since I've broken your pine-tree, we'll try which is the better man at a wrestling-match."

"Aha! then I'll soon satisfy you," shouted the Giant; for if there was one thing on which he prided himself more than another, it was his skill in wrestling.

"Villain, I'll fling you where you can never pick yourself up again!"

On came Antaeus, hopping and capering with the scorching heat of his rage, and getting new vigour wherewith to wreak his passion every time he hopped. But Hercules, you must understand, was wiser than this numbskull of a Giant and had thought of a way to fight him,—huge, earth-born monster that he was,—and to conquer him, too, in spite of all that his Mother Earth could do for him. Watching his opportunity, as the mad Giant made a rush at him, Hercules caught him round the middle with both hands, lifted him high into the air, and held him aloft overhead.

Just imagine it, my dear little friends! What a spectacle it must have been to see this monstrous fellow sprawling in the air, face downward, kicking out his long legs and wriggling his whole vast body, like a baby when its father holds it at arm's length towards the ceiling.

But the most wonderful thing was that, as soon as Antaeus was fairly off the earth, he began to lose the vigour which he had gained by touching it. Hercules very soon perceived that his troublesome enemy was growing weaker, both because he struggled and kicked with less violence and because the thunder of his big voice subsided into a grumble. The truth was that, unless the Giant touched Mother Earth as often as once in five minutes, not only his overgrown strength, but the very breath of his life would depart from him. Hercules had guessed this secret, and it may be well for us all to remember it, in case we should ever have to fight a battle with a fellow like Antaeus. For these earth-born creatures are only difficult to conquer on their own ground, but may easily be managed if we can contrive to lift them into a loftier and purer region. So it proved with the poor Giant, whom I am really a little sorry for, notwithstanding his uncivil way of treating strangers who came to visit him.

When his strength and breath were quite gone, Hercules gave his huge body a toss, and flung it about a mile off, where it fell heavily, and lay with no more motion than a sand-hill. It was too late for the Giant's Mother Earth to help him now, and I should not wonder if his ponderous bones were lying on the same spot to this very day, and were mistaken for those of an uncommonly large elephant.

But, alas me! What a wailing did the poor little Pygmies set up when they saw their enormous brother treated in this terrible manner! If Hercules heard their shrieks, however, he took no notice, and perhaps fancied them only the shrill, plaintive twittering of small birds that had been frightened from their nests by the uproar of the battle between himself

and Antaeus. Indeed, his thoughts had been so much taken up with the Giant, that he had never once looked at the Pygmies, nor even knew that there was such a funny little nation in the world. And now, as he had travelled a good way, and was also rather weary with his exertions in the fight, he spread out his lion's skin on the ground, and, reclining himself upon it, fell fast asleep.

As soon as the Pygmies saw Hercules preparing for a nap, they nodded their little heads at one another, and winked with their little eyes. And when his deep, regular breathing gave them notice that he was asleep, they assembled together in an immense crowd, spreading over a space of about twenty-seven feet square. One of their most eloquent orators (and a valiant warrior enough, besides, though hardly so good at any other weapon as he was with his tongue) climbed upon a toadstool, and, from that elevated position, addressed the multitude. His sentiments were pretty much as follows, or at all events, something like this was probably the upshot of his speech:—

“Tall Pygmies and mighty little men! You and all of us have seen what a public calamity has been brought to pass, and what an insult has here been offered to the majesty of our nation. Yonder lies Antaeus, our great friend and brother, slain, within our territory by a miscreant who took him at a disadvantage, and fought him (if fighting it can be called) in a way that neither man, nor Giant, nor Pygmy, ever dreamed of fighting until this hour. And adding a grievous contumely to the wrong already done us, the miscreant has now fallen asleep as quietly as if nothing were to be dreaded from our wrath. It behoves you, fellow-countrymen, to consider in what aspect we shall stand before the world, and what will be the verdict of impartial history, should we suffer these accumulated outrages to go unavenged.

“Antaeus was our brother, born of that same beloved parent to whom we owe the thews and sinews, as well as

the courageous hearts, which made him proud of our relationship. He was our faithful ally, and fell fighting as much for our national rights and immunities as for his own personal ones. We and our forefathers have dwelt in friendship with him and held affectionate intercourse, as man to man, through immemorial generations. You remember how often our entire people have reposed in his great shadow, and how our little ones have played at hide-and-seek in the tangles of his hair, and how his mighty footsteps have familiarly gone to and fro among us, and never trodden upon any of our toes. And there lies this dear brother—this sweet and amiable friend—this brave and faithful ally—this virtuous Giant—this blameless and excellent Antaeus—dead! Silent! Powerless! A mere mountain of clay! Forgive my tears! Nay, I behold your own! Were we to drown the world with them, could the world blame us?

“But to resume: Shall we, my countrymen, suffer this wicked stranger to depart unharmed, and triumph in his treacherous victory, among distant communities of the earth? Shall we not rather compel him to leave his bones here on our soil by the side of our slain brother’s bones, so that, while one skeleton shall remain as the everlasting monument of our sorrow, the other shall endure as long, exhibiting to the whole human race a terrible example of Pygmy vengeance? Such is the question. I put it to you in full confidence of a response that shall be worthy of our national character, and calculated to increase, rather than diminish, the glory which our ancestors have transmitted to us, and which we ourselves have proudly vindicated in our warfare with the cranes.”

The orator was here interrupted by a burst of irrepressible enthusiasm; every individual Pygmy crying out that the national honour must be preserved at all hazards. He bowed, and, making a gesture for silence, wound up his harangue in the following admirable manner:—

"It only remains for us then to decide whether we shall carry on the war in our national capacity,—one united people against a common enemy,—or whether some champion, famous in former fights, shall be selected to defy the slayer of our brother Antaeus to single combat. In the latter case, though not unconscious that there may be a taller man among you, I hereby offer myself for that enviable duty. And, believe me, dear countrymen, whether I live or die, the honour of this great country shall suffer no diminution in my hands. Never while I can wield this sword, of which I now fling away the scabbard—never, never, never, even if the crimson hand that slew the great Antaeus shall lay me prostrate like him on the soil which I give my life to defend."

So saying this valiant Pygmy drew out his weapon, (which was terrible to behold, being as long as the blade of a penknife) and sent the scabbard whirling over the heads of the multitude. His speech was followed by an uproar of applause, as its patriotism and self-devotion unquestionably deserved; and the shouts and clapping of hands would have been greatly prolonged, had they not been rendered quite inaudible by a long respiration, vulgarly called a snore, from the sleeping Hercules.

It was finally decided that the whole nation of Pygmies should set to work to destroy Hercules, not, be it understood, from any doubt that a single champion would be capable of putting him to the sword, but because he was a public enemy, and all were desirous of sharing in the glory of his defeat. There was a debate whether the national honour did not demand that a herald should be sent with a trumpet, to stand over the ear of Hercules, and, after blowing a blast right into it, to defy him to the combat by formal proclamation. But two or three venerable and sagacious Pygmies, well versed in state affairs, gave it as their opinion that war already existed, and that it was their rightful privilege to take the enemy by surprise. Moreover, if awakened, and

allowed to get upon his feet, Hercules might happen to do them a mischief before he could be beaten down again. For, as these sage counsellors remarked, the stranger's club was really very big, and had rattled like a thunderbolt against the skull of Antaeus. So the Pygmies resolved to assail their antagonist at once.

Accordingly, all the fighting men of the nation took their weapons, and went boldly up to Hercules, who still lay fast asleep, little dreaming of the harm which the Pygmies meant to do him. A body of twenty thousand archers marched in front, with their little bows all ready, and the arrows on the string. The same number were ordered to clamber upon Hercules, some with spades to dig his eyes out and others with bundles of hay, and all manner of rubbish, with which they intended to plug up his mouth and nostrils, so that he might perish for lack of breath. These last, however, could by no means perform their appointed duty, inasmuch as the enemy's breath rushed out of his nose in a hurricane and whirlwind, which blew the Pygmies away as fast as they came nigh. It was found necessary, therefore, to hit upon some other method of carrying on the war.

After holding a council, the captains ordered their troops to collect sticks, straws, dry weeds, and whatever combustible stuff they could find and make a pile of it, heaping it high around the head of Hercules. As a great many thousand Pygmies were employed in this task, they soon brought together several bushels of inflammatory matter, and raised so tall a heap that, mounting on its summit, they were quite upon a level with the sleeper's face. The archers, meanwhile, were stationed within bow-shot, with orders to let fly at Hercules the instant that he stirred. Everything being in readiness, a torch was applied to the pile which immediately burst into flames, and soon waxed hot enough to roast the enemy, had he but chosen to lie still. A Pygmy, you know, though so very small, might set the world on

fire, just as easily as a Giant could, so that this was certainly the very best way of dealing with their foe, provided they could have kept him quiet while the conflagration was going forward. But no sooner did Hercules begin to be scorched, than up he started, with his hair in a red blaze.

"What's all this?" he cried, bewildered with sleep, and staring about him as if he expected to see another Giant.

At that moment the twenty thousand archers twanged their bow-strings, and the arrows came whizzing, like so many winged mosquitoes, right into the face of Hercules. But I doubt whether more than half a dozen of them punctured the skin, which was remarkably tough, as you know the skin of a hero has good need to be.

"Villain!" shouted all the Pygmies at once. "You have killed the Giant Antaeus, our great brother, and the ally of our nation. We declare bloody war against you, and will slay you on the spot!"

Surprised at the shrill piping of so many little voices, Hercules, after putting out the conflagration of his hair, gazed all round about, but could see nothing. At last, however, looking narrowly on the ground, he espied the innumerable assemblage of Pygmies at his feet. He stooped down, and taking up the nearest one between his thumb and finger, set him on the palm of his left hand, and held him at a proper distance for examination. It chanced to be the very Pygmy who had spoken from the top of the toadstool, and had offered himself as a champion to meet Hercules in single combat.

"What in the world, my little fellow," said Hercules, "may you be?"

"I am your enemy," answered the valiant Pygmy, in his mightiest squeak. "You have slain the enormous Antaeus, our brother by the mother's side, and for ages the faithful ally of our nation. We are determined to put you to death, and for my own part, I challenge you to instant battle, on equal ground."

Hercules was so tickled with the Pygmy's big words and warlike gestures, that he burst into a great explosion of laughter, and almost dropped the poor little mite of a creature off the palm of his hand, through the ecstasy and convulsion of his merriment.

"Upon my word," said he, "I thought I had seen wonders before to-day—hydras with nine heads, stags with golden horns, six-legged men, three-headed dogs, giants with furnaces in their stomachs, and nobody knows what besides. But here, on the palm of my hand, stands a wonder that outdoes them all! Your body, my little friend, is about the size of an ordinary man's finger. Pray, how big may your soul be?"

"As big as your own!" said the Pygmy.

Hercules was touched with the little man's dauntless courage, and could not help acknowledging such a brotherhood with him as one hero feels for another.

"My good little people," said he, making a low obeisance to the grand nation, "not for all the world would I do an intentional injury to such brave fellows as you! Your hearts seem to me so exceedingly great, that, upon my honour, I marvel how your small bodies can contain them. I sue for peace, and, as a condition of it, will take five strides, and be out of your kingdom at the sixth. Good-bye. I shall pick my steps carefully, for fear of treading upon some fifty of you, without knowing it. Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! For once, Hercules acknowledges himself vanquished."

THE DERVISH'S STORY.

I HAD scarcely arrived at Teheran, and had taken up my quarters opposite to a druggist's shop, when I was called up in a great hurry by an old woman, who informed me that her master, the druggist, had just been taken exceedingly ill, after having eat more than usual; that the medicine which he had taken had not performed its office; and that his family wished to try what a talisman would do for him: she therefore invited me to write one suited to his case. As I had neither paper, pens, nor ink, I insisted upon going into his *anderun* or women's apartments, and writing it there, to which she consented. I was introduced into a small square yard, and then into a room, where I found the sick man extended on his bed on the ground, surrounded by as many women as the place could hold, who cried aloud, and exclaimed: "*Wahi, wahi*, in the name of God he dies, he dies!" The implements of medicine were spread about, which showed that everything had been done either to kill or save him. A large basin, which had contained the prescription, was seen on the shelf; the long glass tube, that instrument of torture, was in a corner; and among other furniture, the doctor himself was seen seated, quietly smoking, and who, finding that all human means had failed, had had recourse to supernatural, and had prescribed, as a last resource, the talisman which it was my fate to write. A new dervish excited new hopes, for I saw that I produced much stir as I entered the sick room. I asked for paper with an air of authority, as if I felt great confidence in my own powers (although, in

fact, I had never written a talisman before), and a large piece was brought to me, which seemed to have been the wrapper to some drug or other. Pen and ink were also given me; and then, calling up all the gravity I was master of, I scrawled the paper over in a variety of odd characters, which here and there contained the names of Allah, Mohammed, Ali, Hassan, and Hossein, and all the *Imams*, placing them in different anagrams, and substituting here and there figures instead of letters. I then handed it over with great ceremony to the doctor, who, calling for water and a basin, washed the whole of the writing from off the paper into the basin, whilst the bystanders offered up prayers for the efficacy of the precious writing. The doctor then said: "In the name of the Prophet, let the patient take this; and, if fate hath decreed that he is to live, then the sacred names which he will now swallow will restore him: but if not, neither my skill, nor that of any other man, can ever be of the least avail."

The draught was administered, and for some time after the eyes of all around were fixed upon the wretched man's face, as if they expected that a resuscitation would instantly ensue. He remained for some time without showing any symptom of life; when, to the astonishment of all, not excepting myself and the doctor, he groaned, opened his eyes, raised his head on his arm, then called for a basin, and at length vomited in such a manner as would have done credit to the prescription of Abu Avicenna himself. In short, he recovered.

In my own mind I immediately attributed the happy change to the drug which had once been wrapped in the paper, and which, with the nausea of the ink, had produced the effect just described: but I took care to let the bystanders know that the cure was entirely owing to the interference and to the handwriting of one of my sanctity; and that but for me he would have died.

The doctor, on the other hand, took all the merit of the case to himself, for as soon as his patient opened his eyes

he exclaimed, "Did I not tell you so?" and in proportion as the draught operated, he went on exulting thus: "There, there, see the efficacy of my prescription! If it had not been for me, you would have seen the druggist dead before you."

I, however, would not allow him to proceed, and said: "If you are a doctor, why did you not cure him without calling for me? Keep to your blisters and to your bleedings, and do not interfere with that which doth not belong to you."

He answered: "Mr. Dervish, I make no doubt that you can write a very good talisman, and also can get a very good price for it: but every one knows who and what dervishes are; and if their talismans are ever of use, it is not their sanctity which makes them so."

"Whose dog are you," exclaimed I, in return, "to talk to me after this manner? I who am a servant of the Prophet. As for you doctors, your ignorance is proverbial: you hide it by laying all to fate: if by chance your patient recovers, then you take all the credit of the cure to yourselves; should he die, you say, God hath decreed thus; what can the efforts of man avail? Go to, go to; when you have nearly killed your next patient, and then know not what more to ordain, send for me again, and I will cover your impudent ignorance by curing him as I have just done the druggist."

"By my head, and by your death," returned the doctor, "I am not a man to hear this from anyone, much less from a dog of a dervish;" and immediately he got up, and approached me in a threatening attitude, making use of every epithet of abuse that he could think of.

I received him with suitable expressions of contempt, and we very soon came to blows: he fastened upon my hair, and I upon his beard, with such violence that we plucked out whole handfuls from each other: we bit and spat, and fought with such fury, heedless of the sick man and the cries of the women, that the uproar became very great, and, perhaps, would have terminated in something

serious, if one of the women had not run into us, in great agitation, assuring us that the Darogah's officers (policemen) were then knocking at the door of the house, and inquiring whence proceeded all the disturbance.

This parted us, and then I was happy to find that the bystanders were in my favour, for they expressed their contempt of the skill of the physician, whose only object was to obtain money without doing his patients any good, whilst they looked upon me in the light of a divine person, who in my handwriting alone possessed the power of curing all manner of disease.

The doctor, seeing how ill matters were going for him, stole away with the best face he could: but before he left the room, he stooped down, and collecting as many of the hairs of his beard, which I had plucked from him, as he could find, to which he cunningly added some of my own hair, he brandished them in my face, saying: "We shall see on whose side the laugh will be when you are brought before the cadi to-morrow, for beards are worth a ducat per hair in Teheran; and I doubt, with all your talismans, whether you can buy these that I hold in my hand."

It was evident, that when his anger was cooled, out of regard to his own reputation, he would not put his threat into execution; so the fear of being dragged before the justice gave me no uneasiness, and I therefore only considered how to make the most of the fortunate circumstance which had just taken place. The report that the druggist (who was the first in Teheran) had been brought to life, when on the point of death, by a newly arrived dervish, was soon spread about, and I became the object of general concern. From morning to night I was taken up in writing talismans, for which I made my customers pay according to their means, and in a short time I found myself the possessor of some hundreds of piastres. But, unfortunately for me, I did not meet with a dying druggist and a piece of his paper every day; and feeling myself reduced to live upon the reputation

of this one miracle, which I perceived to my sorrow daily diminished, I made a virtue of necessity, and determining to make the tour of Persia, I immediately left Teheran. To whichever city I bent my steps, I managed matters so adroitly, that I made my reputation precede my arrival there. The druggist had given me an attestation, under his seal, that he had been restored to life by virtue of a talisman written by my hand, and this I exhibited wherever I went, to corroborate the truth of the reports which had been circulated in my favour. I am now living upon this reputation: it supports me very tolerably for the present, but whenever I find that it begins to fail, I shall proceed elsewhere.—The dervish here ended his history.

HISTORY OF POET ASKER.

I WAS born in the city of Kerman, and my name is Asker. My father was for a long time governor of that city, during the reign of the eunuch Aga Mohammed Shah; and although the intrigues that were set on foot against him to deprive him of his government were very mischievous, still such was his respectability that his enemies never entirely prevailed against him. His eyes were frequently in danger, but his adroitness preserved them; and he had at last the good fortune to die peaceably in his bed in the present Shah's reign. I was permitted to possess the property which he left, which amounted to about 10,000 tomauns. In my youth I was remarkable for the attention which I paid to my studies, and before I had arrived at the age of sixteen I was celebrated for writing a fine hand. I knew Hafiz entirely by heart, and had myself acquired such a facility in making verses, that I might almost be said to speak in numbers. There was no subject that I did not attempt. I wrote on the loves of Leilah and Majnoun; I never heard the note of a nightingale, but I made it pour out its loves to the rose; and wherever I went I never failed to produce my poetry and chant it out in the assembly. At this time the king was waging war with Sadik Khan, a pretender to the throne, and a battle was fought, in which his Majesty commanded in person, and which terminated in the defeat of the rebel. I immediately sang the king's praises. In describing the contest, I made Rustam, our fabulous hero, appear standing in a cloud just over the field of battle; who, seeing the king lay about him desperately, exclaims to

himself: "Lucky wight am I to be here instead of below, for certainly I should never escape from his blows". I also exerted my wit, and was much extolled when I said, that Sadik Khan and his troops ought not to repine after all, for, although they were vanquished, yet still the king, in his magnanimity, had exalted their heads to the skies. In this I alluded to a pillar of skulls which his Majesty had caused to be erected of the heads of the vanquished. These sayings of mine were reported to the Shah, and he was pleased to confer upon me the highest honour which a poet can receive: namely, causing my mouth to be filled with gold coin in the presence of the whole court, at the great audience. This led to my advancement, and I was appointed to attend at court, and to write verses on all occasions. In order to show my zeal, I represented to the king, that as in former times our great Ferdûsi had written his *Shah Nameh*, or "The History of the Kings," it behoved him, who was greater than any monarch Persia ever possessed, to have a poet who should celebrate his reign, and I entreated permission to write a *Shahin Shah Nameh*, or "The History of the King of Kings," to which his Majesty was most graciously pleased to give his consent. One of my enemies at court was the lord high treasurer, who, without any good reason, wanted to impose upon me a fine of 12,000 tomauns, which the king, on the plea that I was the first poet of the age, would not allow. It happened one day, that in a large assembly, the subject of discussion was the liberality of Mahmoud Shah Ghaznevi to Ferdûsi, who gave him a miscal of gold for every couplet in the *Shah Nameh*. Anxious that the king should hear what I was about to say, I exclaimed: "The liberality of his present Majesty is equal to that of Mahmoud Shah. Equal, did I say? nay, greater, because in the one case it was exercised towards the most celebrated poet of Persia, and in my case it is exercised towards the humble individual now before you."

All the company were anxious to hear how and when

such great favours had been conferred upon me. "In the first place," said I, "when my father died, he left a property of 10,000 tomauns; the king permitted me to inherit it; he might have taken it away—there are 10,000 tomauns. Then the lord high treasurer wanted to fine me 12,000 tomauns; the king did not allow it—there are 12,000 more. Then the rest is made up of what I have subsisted upon ever since I have been in the Shah's service, and so my sum is made out." And then I took to my exclamations of "May the king live for ever!—may his shadow never be less!—may he conquer all his enemies!"—all of which I flattered myself was duly reported to his Majesty, and some days after I was invested with a dress of honour, consisting of a brocade coat, a shawl for the waist, and one for the head, and a brocade cloak trimmed with fur. I was also honoured with the title of Prince of Poets, by virtue of a royal firman, which, according to the usual custom, I wore in my cap for three successive days, receiving the congratulations of my friends, and feeling of greater consequence than I had ever done before. I wrote a poem, which answered the double purpose of gratifying my revenge for the ill-treatment I had received from the lord high treasurer, and of conciliating his good graces; for it had a double meaning all through: what he, in his ignorance mistook for praise, was, in fact, satire; and as he thought that the high-sounding words in which it abounded (which, being mostly Arabic, he did not understand) must contain an eulogium, he did not in the least suspect that they were, in fact, expressions containing the grossest disrespect. In truth, I had so cloaked my meaning, that, without my explanation, it would have been difficult for anyone to have discovered it. But it was not alone in poetry that I excelled. I had a great turn for mechanics, and several of my inventions were much admired at court. I contrived a wheel for perpetual motion, which only wants one little addition to make it go round for

ever. I made different sorts of coloured paper; I invented a new sort of inkstand; and was on the high road to making cloth, when I was stopped by his Majesty, who said to me: "Asker, keep to your poetry: whenever I want cloth, my merchants bring it from Europe". And I obeyed his instructions; for on the approaching festival of the New Year's Day, when it is customary for each of his servants to make him a present, I wrote something so happy about a toothpick, which I presented in a handsome case, that the principal noblemen of the court, at the great public audience of that sacred day, were ordered to kiss me on the mouth for my pains. I compared his Majesty's teeth to pearls, and the toothpick to the pearl-diver; his gums to a coral bank, near which pearls are frequently found; and the long beard and mustachios that encircled the mouth to the undulations of the ocean. I was complemented by everybody present upon the fertility of my imagination: I was assured that Ferdusi was a downright ass when compared to me. By such means I enjoyed great favour with the Shah; and his Majesty being anxious to give me an opportunity of acquiring wealth as well as honours, appointed me to be the bearer of the usual annual dress of honour which he sends to his son, the prince of the province of Fars. I was received at Shiraz with the greatest distinctions, and presents were made to me to a considerable amount: which, in addition to what I had levied from the villages on the road, made a handsome sum.

THE ADVENTURES OF THREE SHIPWRECKED BOYS *ON A CORAL ISLAND OF THE SOUTH SEAS.

Our first care, after breakfast, was to place the few articles we possessed in the crevice of a rock at the further end of a small cave which we discovered near our encampment. This cave, we hoped, might be useful to us afterwards as a storehouse. Then we cut two large clubs off a species of very hard tree which grew near at hand. One of these was given to Peterkin, the other to me, and Jack armed himself with the axe. We took these precautions because we purposed to make an excursion to the top of the mountains of the interior, in order to obtain a better view of our island. Of course we knew not what dangers might befall us by the way, so thought it best to be prepared.

Having completed our arrangements and carefully extinguished our fire, we sallied forth and walked a short distance along the sea-beach, till we came to the entrance of a valley, through which flowed the rivulet before mentioned. Here we turned our backs on the sea and struck into the interior.

The prospect that burst upon our view on entering the valley was truly splendid. On either side of us there was a gentle rise in the land, which thus formed two ridges about a mile apart on each side of the valley. These ridges—which as well as the low ground between them were covered with trees and shrubs of the most luxuriant kind—continued to recede inland for about two miles, when they joined the foot of a small mountain. This hill rose rather abruptly from

the head of the valley, and was likewise entirely covered even to the top with trees, except on one particular spot near the left shoulder, where was a bare and rocky place of a broken and savage character. Beyond this hill we could not see, and we therefore directed our course up the banks of the rivulet towards the foot of it, intending to climb to the top, should that be possible, as, indeed, we had no doubt it was.

Jack, being the wisest and boldest among us, took the lead, carrying the axe on his shoulder. Peterkin, with his enormous club, came second, as he said he should like to be in a position to defend me if any danger should threaten. I brought up the rear, but, having been more taken up with the wonderful and curious things I saw at starting than with thoughts of possible danger, I had very foolishly left my club behind me. Although, as I have said, the trees and bushes were very luxuriant, they were not so thickly crowded together as to hinder our progress among them. We were able to wind in and out, and to follow the banks of the stream quite easily, although, it is true, the height and thickness of the foliage prevented us from seeing far ahead. But sometimes a jutting out rock on the hill-sides afforded us a position whence we could enjoy the romantic view and mark our progress towards the foot of the hill. I was particularly struck, during the walk, with the richness of the undergrowth in most places, and recognized many berries and plants that resembled those of my native land, especially a tall, elegantly formed fern, which emitted an agreeable perfume. There were several kinds of flowers, too, but I did not see so many of these as I should have expected in such a climate. We also saw a great variety of small birds of bright plumage, and many paroquets similar to the one that awoke Peterkin so rudely in the morning.

Thus we advanced to the foot of the hill without encountering anything to alarm us, except, indeed, once, when we were passing close under a part of the hill which was

hidden from our view by the broad leaves of the banana-trees, which grew in great luxuriance in that part. Jack was just preparing to force his way through this thicket, when we were startled and arrested by a strange pattering or rumbling sound, which appeared to us quite different from any of the sounds we had heard during the previous part of our walk.

"Hallo!" cried Peterkin, stopping short and grasping his club with both hands, "what's that?"

Neither of us replied; but Jack seized his axe in his right hand, while with the other he pushed aside the broad leaves and endeavoured to peer amongst them.

"I can see nothing," he said, after a short pause. "I think it——"

Again the rumbling sound came, louder than before, and we all sprang back and stood on the defensive. For myself, having forgotten my club, and not having taken the precaution to cut another, I buttoned my jacket, doubled my fists, and threw myself into a boxing attitude. I must say, however, that I felt somewhat uneasy; and my companions afterwards confessed that their thoughts at this moment had been instantly filled with all they had ever heard or read of wild beasts and savages, torturings at the stake, roastings alive, and such like horrible things. Suddenly the pattering noise increased with tenfold violence. It was followed by a fearful crash among the bushes, which was rapidly repeated, as if some gigantic animal were bounding towards us. In another moment an enormous rock came crashing through the shrubbery, followed by a cloud of dust and small stones, and flew close past the spot where we stood, carrying bushes and young trees along with it.

"Pooh! is that all?" exclaimed Peterkin, wiping the perspiration off his forehead. "Why, I thought it was all the wild men and beasts in the South Sea Islands galloping on in one grand charge to sweep us off the face of the earth, instead of a mere stone tumbling down the mountain side."

"Nevertheless," remarked Jack, "if that same stone had hit any of us, it would have rendered the charge you speak of quite unnecessary, Peterkin."

This was true, and I felt very thankful for our escape. On examining the spot more narrowly, we found that it lay close to the foot of a very rugged precipice, from which stones of various sizes were always tumbling at intervals. Indeed, the numerous fragments lying scattered all around might have suggested the cause of the sound, had we not been too suddenly alarmed to think of anything.

We now resumed our journey, resolving that, in our future excursions into the interior, we would be careful to avoid this dangerous precipice.

Soon afterwards we arrived at the foot of the hill and prepared to ascend it. Here Jack made a discovery which caused us all very great joy. This was a tree of a remarkably beautiful appearance, which Jack confidently declared to be the celebrated bread-fruit tree.

"Is it celebrated?" inquired Peterkin, with a look of great simplicity.

"It is," replied Jack.

"That's odd, now," rejoined Peterkin, "I never heard of it before."

"Then it's not so celebrated as I thought it was," returned Jack, quietly squeezing Peterkin's hat over his eyes, "but listen, and hear of it now."

Peterkin readjusted his hat, and was soon listening with as much interest as myself, while Jack told us that this tree is one of the most valuable in the islands of the south; that it bears two, sometimes three, crops of fruit in the year; that the fruit is very like wheaten bread in appearance, and that it constitutes the principal food of many of the Islanders.

"So," said Peterkin, "we seem to have everything ready prepared to our hands in this wonderful island,—lemonade ready bottled in nuts, and loaf-bread growing on the trees!"

Peterkin, as usual, was jesting ; nevertheless, it is a curious fact that he spoke almost the literal truth.

"Moreover," continued Jack, "the bread-fruit tree affords a capital gum, which serves the natives for pitching their canoes ; the bark of the young branches is made by them into cloth ; and of the wood, which is durable and of a good colour, they build their houses. So you see, lads, that we have no lack of material here to make us comfortable, if we are only clever enough to use it."

"But are you sure that that's it?" asked Peterkin.

"Quite sure," replied Jack, "for I was particularly interested in the account I once read of it, and I remember the description well. I am sorry, however, that I have forgotten the descriptions of many other trees which I am sure we have seen to-day, if we could but recognize them. So you see, Peterkin, I'm not up to everything yet."

"Never mind, Jack," said Peterkin, with a grave patronizing expression of countenance, patting his tall companion on the shoulder,— "never mind, Jack ; you know a good deal for your age. You're a clever boy, sir,—a promising young man ; and if you only go on as you have begun, sir, you will——"

The end of this speech was suddenly cut short by Jack tripping up Peterkin's heels and tumbling him into a mass of thick shrubs, where, finding himself comfortable, he lay still, basking in the sunshine, while Jack and I examined the bread-fruit tree.

We were much struck with the deep, rich green colour of its broad leaves, which were twelve or eighteen inches long, deeply indented, and of a glossy smoothness, like the laurel. The fruit, with which it was loaded, was nearly round, and appeared to be about six inches in diameter, with a rough rind, marked with lozenge-shaped divisions. It was of various colours, from light pea-green to brown and rich yellow. Jack said that the yellow was the ripe fruit. We afterwards found that most of the fruit-trees on the island

were evergreens, and that we might, when we wished, pluck the blossom and the ripe fruit from the same tree. Such a wonderful difference from the trees of our own country surprised us not a little. The bark of the tree was rough and light coloured; the trunk was about two feet in diameter, and it appeared to be twenty feet high, being quite destitute of branches up to that height, where it branched off into a beautiful and umbrageous head. We noticed that the fruit hung in clusters of twos and threes on the branches; but as we were anxious to get to the top of the hill, we refrained from attempting to pluck any at that time.

While on our way up we came to an object which filled us with much interest. This was the stump of a tree that had evidently been cut down with an axe! So, then, we were not the first who had viewed this beautiful isle. The hand of man had been at work there before us. It now began to recur to us again that perhaps the island was inhabited, although we had not seen any traces of man until now, but a second glance at the stump convinced us that we had not more reason to think so now than formerly, for the surface of the wood was quite decayed, and partly covered with fungus and green matter, so that it must have been cut many years ago.

"Perhaps," said Peterkin, "some ship or other has touched here long ago for wood, and only taken one tree."

We did not think this likely, however, because, in such circumstances, the crew of a ship would cut wood of small size, and near the shore, whereas this was a large tree and stood near the top of the mountain. In fact it was the highest large tree on the mountain, all above it being wood of very recent growth.

"I can't understand it," said Jack, scratching the surface of the stump with his axe. "I can only suppose that the savages have been here and cut it for some purpose known only to themselves. But, hallo! what have we here?"

As he spoke, Jack began carefully to scrape away the

moss and fungus from the stump, and soon laid bare three distinct traces of marks, as if some inscription or initials had been cut thereon. But although the traces were distinct, beyond all doubt, the exact form of the letters could not be made out. Jack thought they looked like J. S., but we could not be certain. They had apparently been carelessly cut, and long exposure to the weather had so broken them up that we could not make out what they were. We were exceedingly perplexed at this discovery, and stayed a long time at the place conjecturing what these marks could have been, but without avail, so, as the day was advancing we left it and quickly reached the top of the mountain.

We found this to be the highest point of the island, and from it we saw our kingdom lying, as it were, like a map around us. As I have always thought it impossible to get a thing properly into one's understanding without comprehending it, I shall beg the reader's patience for a little while I describe our island, thus, shortly:—

It consisted of two mountains; the one we guessed at 500 feet; the other, on which we stood, at 1000. Between these lay a rich, beautiful valley, as already said. This valley crossed the island from one end to the other, being high in the middle and sloping on each side towards the sea. The large mountain sloped, on the side farthest from where we had been wrecked, gradually towards the sea; but although, when viewed at a glance, it had thus a regular sloping appearance, a more careful observation showed that it was broken up into a multitude of very small vales, or rather dells and glens, intermingled with little rugged spots and small but abrupt precipices here and there, with rivulets tumbling over their edges and wandering down the slopes in little white streams, sometimes glistening among the broad leaves of the bread-fruit and cocoanut trees, or hiding together beneath the rich underwood. At the base of this mountain lay a narrow bright green plain or meadow, which terminated abruptly at the shore. On the other side of the island,

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hence we had come, stood the smaller hill, at the foot of which diverged three valleys, one being that which we had descended, with a smaller vale on each side of it, and separated from it by the two ridges before mentioned. In these smaller valleys there were no streams, but they were clothed with the same luxuriant vegetation.

The diameter of the island seemed to be about ten miles, and, as it was almost circular in form, its circumference must have been thirty miles, perhaps a little more, if allowance be made for the numerous bays and indentations of the shore. The entire island was belted by a beach of pure white sand, on which laved the gentle ripples of the lagoon. I now also observed that the coral reef completely encircled the island; but it varied its distance from it here and there, some places being a mile from the beach, in others, a few hundred yards, but the average distance was half a mile. The reef lay very low, and the spray of surf broke quite over in many places. This surf never ceased its roar, for, however calm the weather might be, there is always a gentle rolling motion in the great Pacific, which, although scarcely perceptible out at sea, reaches the shore at last in a huge swell. The water within the lagoon, as before said, was perfectly still. There were three narrow openings in the reef; one opposite each end of the valley which I have described as crossing the island; the other opposite our own valley, which we afterwards named the Valley of the Wreck. At each of these openings the reef rose into two small green islets covered with bushes and having one or two cocoanuts on each. These islets were very singular, and appeared as if planted expressly for the purpose of marking the channel to the lagoon. Our captain was making for one of these openings the day we were wrecked, and would have reached it, I doubt not, had not the rudder been torn away. Within the lagoon were several pretty, low coral islands, opposite our encampment; and, immediately beyond these, out at sea, lay about a dozen other islands, at various

distances, from half a mile to ten miles, all of them as far as we could discern, smaller than ours and apparently uninhabited. They seemed to be low coral islands, raised but little above the sea, yet covered with cocoanut trees.

All this we noted, and a great deal more, while we sat on the top of the mountain. After we had satisfied ourselves we prepared to return ; but here again we discovered traces of the presence of man. These were a pole or staff and one or two pieces of wood which had been squared with an axe. All of these were, however, very much decayed, and they had evidently not been touched for many years.

Full of these discoveries we returned to our encampment. On the way we fell in with the traces of some four-footed animal, but whether old or of recent date none of us was able to guess. This also tended to raise our hopes of obtaining some animal food on the islands, so we reached home in good spirits, quite prepared for supper, and highly satisfied with our excursion.

After much discussion, in which Peterkin took the lead, we came to the conclusion that the island was uninhabited, and went to bed.

For several days after the excursion related in the last chapter we did not wander far from our encampment, but gave ourselves up to forming plans for the future and making our present abode comfortable.

There were various causes that induced this state of comparative inaction. In the first place, although everything around us was so delightful, and we could without difficulty obtain all that we required for our bodily comfort, we did not quite like the idea of settling down here for the rest of our lives, far away from our friends and our native land. Then there was a little uncertainty still as to there being natives on the island, and we entertained a kind of faint hope that a ship might come and take us off. But as day after day passed, and neither savages nor ships appeared, we gave up all hope of an early deliverance, and set diligently to work at our homestead.

During this time, however, we had not been altogether idle. We made several experiments in cooking the cocoa-nut, most of which did not improve it. Then we removed our goods, and took up our abode in the cave, but found the change so bad that we returned gladly to the bower. Besides this, we bathed very frequently, and talked a great deal, at least Jack and Peterkin did—I listened. Among other useful things, Jack, who was ever the most active and diligent, converted about three inches of the hoop-iron into an excellent knife. First he beat it quite flat with the axe. Then he made a rude handle, and tied the hoop-iron to it with a piece of whip-cord, and ground it to an edge on a piece of sand-stone. When it was finished he used it to shape a better handle, to which he fixed it with a strip of his cotton handkerchief. However, the whip-cord, thus set free, was used by Peterkin as a fishing line. He merely tied a piece of oyster to the end of it. This the fish were allowed to swallow, and then they were pulled quickly ashore. But as the line was very short and we had no boat, the fish we caught were exceedingly small.

One day Peterkin came up from the beach, where he had been angling, and said in a very cross tone, "I'll tell you what, Jack, I'm not going to be humbugged with catching such contemptible things any longer. I want you to swim out with me on your back, and let me fish in deep water!"

"Dear me, Peterkin," replied Jack, "I had no idea you were taking the thing so much to heart, else I would have got you out of that difficulty long ago. Let me see,"—and Jack looked down at a piece of timber on which he had been labouring, with a peculiar gaze of abstraction, which he always assumed when trying to invent or discover anything.

"What say you to building a boat?" he inquired, looking up hastily.

"Take far too long," was the reply; "can't be bothered waiting. I want to begin at once!"

Again Jack considered. "I want to begin at once!" he

cried. "We'll fell a large tree and launch the trunk of it in the water, so that when you want to fish you've nothing to do but to swim out to it."

"Would not a small raft do better?" said I.

"Much better; but we have no ropes to bind it together with. Perhaps we may find something hereafter that will do as well, but, in the meantime, let us try the tree."

This was agreed on, so we started off to a spot not far distant, where we knew of a tree that would suit us, which grew near the water's edge. As soon as we reached it Jack threw off his coat, and, wielding the axe with his sturdy arms, hacked and hewed at it for a quarter of an hour without stopping. Then he paused, and while he sat down to rest I continued the work. Then Peterkin made a vigorous attack on it, so that when Jack renewed his powerful blows, a few minutes' cutting brought it down with a terrible crash.

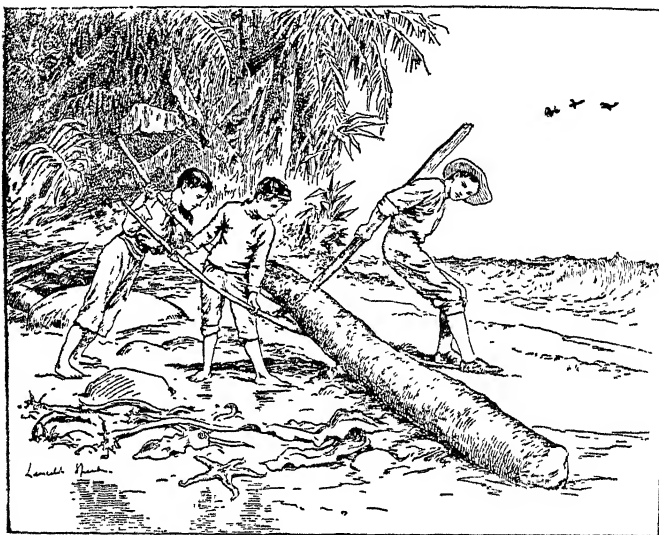
"Hurrah! now for it," cried Jack; "let us off with its head."

So saying, he began to cut through the stem again, at about six yards from the thick end. This done, he cut three strong, short poles or levers from the stout branches, with which to roll the log down the beach into the sea; for, as it was nearly two feet thick at the large end, we could not move it without such helps. With the levers, however, we rolled it slowly into the sea.

Having been thus successful in launching our vessel, we next shaped the levers into rude oars or paddles, and then attempted to embark. This was easy enough to do; but, after seating ourselves astride the log, it was with the utmost difficulty we kept it from rolling round and plunging us into the water. Not that we minded that much; but we preferred, if possible, to fish in dry clothes. To be sure, our trousers were necessarily wet, as our legs were dangling in the water on each side of the log; but, as they could be easily dried, we did not care. After half an hour's practice,

we became expert enough to keep our balance pretty steadily. Then Peterkin laid down his paddle, and having baited his line with a whole oyster, dropped it into deep water.

"Now, then, Jack," said he, "be cautious; steer clear of that seaweed. There! that's it; gently now, gently. I see



a fellow at least a foot long down there coming to—ha! that's it! Oh bother! he's off."

"Did he bite?" said Jack, urging the log onwards a little with his paddle.

"Bite? ay! He took it into his mouth, but the moment I began to haul he opened his jaws and let it out again."

"Let him swallow it next time," said Jack, laughing at the melancholy expression of Peterkin's visage.

"There he is again," cried Peterkin, his eyes flashing with excitement. "Look out! Now then! No! Yes! No! Why, the brute won't swallow it!"

"Try to haul him up by the mouth, then," cried Jack. "Do it gently."

A heavy sigh and a look of blank despair showed that poor Peterkin had tried and failed again.

"Never mind, lad," said Jack, in a voice of sympathy; "we'll move on, and offer it to some other fish." So saying, Jack plied his paddle; but scarcely had he moved from the spot, when a fish with an enormous head and a little body darted from under a rock and swallowed the bait at once.

"Got him this time—that's fact!" cried Peterkin, hauling in the line. "He's swallowed the bait right down to his tail, I declare. Oh, what a thumper!"

As the fish came struggling to the surface, we leaned forward to see it, and overbalanced the log. Peterkin threw his arms round the fish's neck; and, in another instant, we were all floundering in the water!

A shout of laughter burst from us as we rose to the surface like three drowned rats, and seized hold of the log. We soon recovered our position, and sat more warily, while Peterkin secured the fish, which had well-nigh escaped in the midst of our struggles. It was little worth having, however; but, as Peterkin remarked, it was better than the smouts he had been catching for the last two or three days; so we laid it on the log before us, and having re-baited the line, dropped it in again for another.

Now, while we were thus intent upon our sport, our attention was suddenly attracted by a ripple on the sea, just a few yards away from us. Peterkin shouted to us to paddle in that direction, as he thought it was a big fish, and we might have a chance of catching it. But Jack, instead of complying, said, in a deep, earnest tone of voice, which I never before heard him use:—

"Haul up your line, Peterkin; seize your paddle; quick,—it's a shark!"

The horror with which we heard this may well be im-

agined, for it must be remembered that our legs were hanging down in the water, and we could not venture to pull them up without upsetting the log. Peterkin instantly hauled up the line; and, grasping his paddle, exerted himself to the utmost, while we also did our best to make for shore. But we were a good way off, and the log being, as I have before said, very heavy, moved but slowly through the water. We now saw the shark quite distinctly swimming round and round us, its sharp fin every now and then protruding above the water. From its active and unsteady motions, Jack knew it was making up its mind to attack us, so he urged us vehemently to paddle for our lives, while he himself set us the example. Suddenly he shouted, "Look out! there he comes!" and in a second we saw the monstrous fish dive close under us, and turn half over on his side. But we all made a great commotion with our paddles, which no doubt frightened it away for that time, as we saw it immediately after circling round us as before.

"Throw the fish to him," cried Jack, in a quick, suppressed voice, "we'll make the shore in time yet if we can keep him off for a few minutes."

Peterkin stopped one instant to obey the command, and then plied his paddle again with all his might. No sooner had the fish fallen on the water than we observed the shark to sink. In another second we saw its white breast rising; for sharks always turn over on their sides when about to seize their prey, their mouths being not at the point of their heads like those of other fish, but, as it were, under their chins. In another moment his snout rose above the water—his wide jaws, armed with a terrific double row of teeth, appeared. The dead fish was engulfed, and the shark sank out of sight. But Jack was mistaken in supposing that it would be satisfied. In a very few minutes it returned to us, and its quick motions led us to fear that it would attack us at once.

"Stop paddling," cried Jack suddenly. "I see it coming

up behind us. Now, obey my orders quickly. Our lives may depend on it. Ralph, Peterkin, do your best to balance the log. Don't look out for the shark. Don't glance behind you. Do nothing but balance the log."

Peterkin and I instantly did as we were ordered, being only too glad to do anything that afforded us a chance or a hope of escape, for we had implicit confidence in Jack's courage and wisdom. For a few seconds, that seemed long minutes to



my mind, we sat thus silently; but I could not resist glancing backward, despite the orders to the contrary. On doing so, I saw Jack sitting rigid like a statue, with his paddle raised, his lips compressed, and his eyebrows bent over his eyes, which glared savagely from beneath them down into the water. I also saw the shark, to my horror, quite close under the log, in the act of darting towards Jack's foot. I could scarce suppress a cry on beholding this. In another moment the shark rose. Jack drew his leg suddenly from

the water, and threw it over the log. The monster's snout rubbed against the log as it passed, and revealed its hideous jaws, into which Jack instantly plunged the paddle, and thrust it down its throat. So violent was this act that Jack rose to his feet in performing it; the log was thereby rolled completely over, and we were once more plunged into the water. We all rose spluttering and gasping in a moment.

"Now, then, strike out for shore," cried Jack. "Here, Peterkin, catch hold of my collar, and kick out with a will."

Peterkin did as he was desired, and Jack struck out with such a force that he cut through the water like a boat; while I, being free from all encumbrance, succeeded in keeping up with him. As we had by this time drawn pretty near to the shore, a few minutes more sufficed to carry us into shallow water; and, finally, we landed in safety, though very much exhausted, and not a little frightened by our terrible adventure.

A LESSON OF FAITH.

"LET me hire you as a nurse for my poor children," said a Butterfly to a quiet Caterpillar, who was strolling along a cabbage-leaf in her odd lumbering way. "See these little eggs," continued the Butterfly. "I don't know how long it will be before they come to life, and I feel very sick and poorly, and if I should die, who will take care of my baby butterflies when I am gone? Will you, kind, mild, green Caterpillar? But you must mind what you give them to eat, Caterpillar! They cannot, of course, live on your rough food.

"You must give them early dew, and honey from the flowers; and you must let them fly about only a little way at first; for of course, one can't expect them to use their wings properly all at once. Dear me! it is a sad pity you cannot fly yourself. But I have no time to look for another nurse now, so you will do your best, I hope. Dear! dear! I cannot think what made me come and lay my eggs on a cabbage-leaf! What a place for young butterflies to be born upon! Still, you will be kind, will you not, to the poor little ones? Here take this gold-dust from my wings as a reward. Oh, how dizzy I am! Caterpillar! you will remember about the food——"

And with these words the Butterfly drooped her wings and died; and the green Caterpillar, who had not had the opportunity of even saying Yes or No to the request, was left standing alone by the side of the Butterfly's eggs.

"A pretty nurse she has chosen, indeed, poor lady!" exclaimed she, "and a pretty business I have in hand!"

Why, her senses must have left her, or she never would have asked a poor crawling creature like me to bring up her dainty little ones! Much they'll mind me, truly, when they feel the gay wings on their backs, and can fly away out of my sight whenever they choose! Ah! how silly some people are, in spite of their painted clothes and the gold-dust on their wings!"

However, the poor Butterfly was dead, and there lay the eggs on the cabbage-leaf; and the green caterpillar had a kind heart so she resolved to do her best. But she got no sleep that night, she was so very anxious. She made her back quite ache with walking all night long round her young charges, for fear any harm should happen to them; and in the morning says she to herself:—

"Two heads are better than one. I will consult some wise animal upon the matter, and get advice. How should a poor crawling creature like me know what to do without asking my betters?"

But still there was a difficulty—whom should the Caterpillar consult? There was the shaggy dog who sometimes came into the garden. But he was so rough!—he would most likely whisk all the eggs off the cabbage-leaf with one brush of his tail, if she called him near to talk to her, and then she should never forgive herself. There was the tom cat, to be sure, who would sometimes sit at the foot of the apple-tree, basking himself and warming his fur in the sunshine; but he was so selfish and indifferent! there was no hope of his giving himself the trouble to think about butterflies' eggs.

"I wonder which is the wisest of all the animals I know," sighed the Caterpillar, in great distress; and then she thought, and thought, till at last she thought of the Lark; and she fancied that because he went up so high, and nobody knew where he went to, he must be very clever, and know a great deal; for to go up very high (which she could never do) was the Caterpillar's idea of perfect glory.

Now, in the neighbouring corn-field there lived a Lark, and the Caterpillar sent a message to him, to beg him to come and talk to her; and when he came she told him all her difficulties, and asked him what she was to do, to feed and rear the little creatures so different from herself.

"Perhaps you will be able to inquire and hear something about it next time you go up high," observed the Caterpillar timidly."

The Lark said "perhaps he should"; but he did not satisfy her curiosity any further. Soon afterwards, however, he went singing upwards into the bright, blue sky. By degrees his voice died away in the distance, till the green Caterpillar could not hear a sound. It is nothing to say she could not see him; for, poor thing! she never could see far at any time, and had a difficulty in looking upwards at all, even when she reared herself up most carefully, which she did now; but it was of no use, so she dropped upon her legs again, and resumed her walk round the Butterfly's eggs, nibbling a bit of the cabbage-leaf now and then as she moved along.

"What a time the Lark has been gone!" she cried at last. "I wonder where he is just now! I would give all my legs to know! He must have flown up higher than usual this time, I do think! How I should like to know where it is that he goes to, and what he hears in that curious blue sky! He always sings in going up and coming down, but he never lets any secret out. He is very, very close!"

And the green Caterpillar took another turn round the Butterfly's eggs.

At last the Lark's voice began to be heard again. The Caterpillar almost jumped for joy, and it was not long before she saw her friend descend with hushed note to the cabbage bed.

"News, news, glorious news, friend Caterpillar!" sang the Lark; "but the worst of it is, you won't believe me!"

"I believe everything I am told," observed the Caterpillar hastily.

"Well, then, first of all, I will tell you what these little creatures are to eat"—and the Lark nodded his beak towards the eggs. "What do you think it is to be? Guess!"

"Dew, and the honey out of flowers, I am afraid," sighed the Caterpillar.

"No such thing, old lady! Something simpler than that. Something you can get at quite easily."

"I can get at nothing quite easily but cabbage-leaves," murmured the Caterpillar, in distress.

"Excellent, my good friend!" cried the Lark; "you have found it out. You are to feed them with cabbage-leaves."

"Never!" said the Caterpillar indignantly. "It was their dying mother's last request that I should do no such thing."

"Their dying mother knew nothing about the matter," persisted the Lark. "But why do you ask me, and then disbelieve what I say? You have neither faith nor trust."

"Oh, I believe everything I am told," said the Caterpillar.

"Nay, but you do not," replied the Lark; "you won't believe me even about the food, and yet that is but a beginning of what I have to tell you. Why, Caterpillar, what do you think those little eggs will turn out to be?"

"Butterflies, to be sure," said the Caterpillar.

"Caterpillars!" sang the Lark; "and you'll find it out in time;" and the Lark flew away, for he did not want to stay and contest the point with his friend.

"I thought the Lark had been wise and kind," observed the mild green Caterpillar, once more beginning to walk round the eggs, "but I find that he is foolish and saucy instead. Perhaps he went up too high this time. Ah, it's a pity when people who soar so high are silly and rude nevertheless! Dear! I still wonder whom he sees, and what he does up yonder."

"I would tell you, if you would believe me," sang the Lark, descending once more.

"I believe everything I am told," reiterated the Caterpillar, with as grave a face as if it were a fact.

"Then I'll tell you something else," cried the Lark; "for the best of my news remains behind. You will one day be a Butterfly, yourself."

"Wretched bird!" exclaimed the Caterpillar; "now you are cruel as well as foolish. Go away! I will ask your advice no more".

"I told you you would not believe me," cried the Lark, nettled in his turn.

"I believe everything that I am told," persisted the Caterpillar; "that is"—and she hesitated—"everything that it is reasonable to believe. But to tell me that butterflies' eggs are caterpillars, and that caterpillars leave off crawling and get wings, and become butterflies——! Lark! you are too wise, to believe such nonsense yourself, for you know it is impossible."

"I know no such thing," said the Lark, warmly. "Whether I hover over the corn-fields of earth, or go up into the depths of the sky, I see so many wonderful things, I know no reason why there should not be more. Oh, Caterpillar! it is because you crawl, because you never get beyond your cabbage-leaf, that you call anything impossible."

"Nonsense!" shouted the Caterpillar. "I know what's possible, and what's not possible, as well as you do. Look at my long green body and these endless legs, and then talk to me about having wings and a painted, feathery coat! Fool——!"

"And fool you! you would-be wise Caterpillar!" cried the indignant Lark. "Fool, to attempt to reason about what you cannot understand! Do you not hear how my song swells with rejoicing as I soar upwards to the mysterious wonder-world above? Oh, Caterpillar! what comes to you from thence, receive as I do upon trust."

"That is what you call——"

"Faith," interrupted the Lark.

"How am I to learn Faith?" asked the Caterpillar.

At that moment she felt something at her side. She looked round—eight or ten little green caterpillars were moving about, and had already made a show of a hole in the cabbage-leaf. They had broken from the Butterfly's eggs!

Shame and amazement filled our green friend's heart, but joy soon followed, for, as the first wonder was possible, the second might be so too. "Teach me your lesson, Lark!" she would say; and the Lark sang to her of the wonders of the earth below, and of the heaven above. And the Caterpillar talked all the rest of her life to her relations of the time when she should be a Butterfly.

But none of them believed her. She nevertheless had learnt the Lark's lesson of Faith, and when she was going into her chrysalis grave, she said—"I shall be a Butterfly some day!"

But her relations thought her head was wandering, and they said, "Poor thing!"

And when she was a Butterfly, and was going to die again, she said:—

"I have known many wonders—I have faith—I can trust even now for what shall come next!"

THE LAW OF AUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE.

A FINE young Working-bee left his hive, one lovely summer's morning, to gather honey from the flowers. The sun shone so brightly, and the air felt so warm, that he flew a long, long distance, till he came to some gardens that were very beautiful and gay; and there having roamed about, in and out of the flowers, buzzing in great delight, till he had so loaded himself with treasures that he could carry no more, he bethought himself of returning home. But, just as he was beginning his journey, he accidentally flew through the open window of a country house, and found himself in a large dining-room.

There was a great deal of noise and confusion, for it was dinner-time, and the guests were talking rather loudly, so that the Bee got quite frightened. Still he tried to taste some rich sweetmeats that lay temptingly in a dish on the table, when all at once he heard a child exclaim with a shout, "Oh, there's a bee, let me catch him," on which he rushed hastily back to (as he thought) the open air. But, alas! poor fellow, in another second he found that he had flung himself against a hard transparent wall! In other words, he had flown against the glass panes of the window, being quite unable, in his alarm and confusion to distinguish the glass from the opening by which he had entered. This unexpected blow annoyed him much; and having wearied himself in vain attempts to find the entrance, he began to walk slowly and quietly up and down the wooden frame at the bottom of the panes, hoping to recover both his strength and composure.

Presently, as he was walking along, his attention was

attracted by hearing the soft half-whispering voices of two children, who were kneeling down and looking at him.

Says the one to the other, "This is a Working-bee, Sister ; I see the pollen-bags under his thighs. Nice fellow ! how busy he has been !"

"Does he make the pollen and honey himself ?" whispered the girl.

"Yes, he gets them from the insides of the flowers. Don't you remember how we watched the bees once, dodging in and out of the crocuses, how we laughed at them, they were so busy and fussy, and their dark coats looked so handsome against the yellow leaves ? I wish I had seen this fellow loading himself to-day. But he does more than that. He builds the honeycomb, and does pretty nearly everything. He's a working-bee, poor wretch !"

"What is a working-bee ? and why do you call him 'poor wretch' ?"

"Why, don't you know, Uncle Collins says, all people are poor wretches who work for other people who don't work for themselves ? And that is just what this bee does. There is the queen-bee in the hive, who does nothing at all but sit at home, give orders and coddle the little ones ; and all the bees wait upon her, and obey her. Then there are the drones—lazy fellows, who lounge all their time away. And then there are the working-bees like this one here, and they do all the work for everybody. How Uncle Collins would laugh at them, if he knew !"

"Doesn't Uncle Collins know about bees ?"

"No, I think not. It was the gardener who told me. And, besides, I think Uncle Collins would never have done talking about them and quizzing them, if he once knew they couldn't do without a queen. I heard him say yesterday, that kings and queens were against nature, for that nature never makes one man a king and another man a cobbler, but makes them all alike, and so he says, kings and queens are very unjust things."

"Bees have not the sense to know anything about that," observed the little girl, softly.

"Of course not! Only fancy how angry these working fellows would be, if they knew what the gardener told me!"

"What was that?"

"Why, that the working-bees are just the same as the queen when they are first born; just exactly the same; and that it is only the food that is given them, and the shape of the house they live in, that make the difference. The bee-nurses manage that; they give some one sort of food, and some another, and they make the cells different shapes, and so some turn out queens, and the rest working-bees. It's just what Uncle Collins says about kings and cobblers—nature makes them all alike. But, look! the dinner is over; we must go."

"Wait till I let the bee out, brother," said the little girl, taking him gently up in a soft handkerchief; and then she looked at him kindly, and said, "Poor fellow! so you might have been a queen if they had only given you the right food, and put you into a right-shaped house! What a shame they didn't! As it is" (and here her voice took a childish, mocking tone)—"As it is, my good friend, you must go and drudge away all your life long, making honey and wax. Well, get along with you! Good luck to your labours!" And with these words she fluttered her handkerchief through the open window, and the bee found himself once more floating in the air.

Oh, what a fine evening it was! But the liberated bee did not think so. The sun still shone beautifully though lower in the sky, though the light was softer, and the shadows were longer; and as to flowers, they were more fragrant than ever. Yet the poor bee felt as if there were a dark heavy cloud over the sky, but in reality the cloud was over his own heart, for he had become discontented and ambitious, and he rebelled against the authority under which he had been born.

At last he reached his home—the hive which he had left with such a happy heart in the morning—and, after dashing in in a hurried and angry manner, he began to unload the bags under his thighs of their precious contents, and as he did so he exclaimed, “I am the most wretched of creatures!”

“What is the matter? What have you done?” cried an old Relation, who was at work near him.

“Oh!” answered the Bee, impatiently, “I have travelled a long way, and have heard a great deal about myself that I never knew before, and I know now that we are a set of wretched creatures!”

“And, pray, what wise animal has been persuading you of that against your own experience?” asked the old Relation.

“I have learned a truth,” answered the Bee, in an indignant tone, “and it matters not who taught me.”

“Certainly not; but it matters very much that you should not fancy yourself wretched merely because some foolish creature has told you you are so; you know very well that you never were wretched till you were told you were so. I call that very silly; but I shall say no more to you.” And the old Relation turned himself round to his work, singing very pleasantly all the time.

But the Traveller-bee would not be laughed out of his wretchedness: so he collected some of his young companions around him, and told them what he had heard in the large dining-room of the country house; and all were astonished, and most of them vexed. Then he grew so much pleased at finding himself able to create such excitement and interest, that he became sillier every minute, and made a long speech on the injustice of there being such things as queens, and talked of nature making them all equal and alike, with an energy that would have delighted Uncle Collins himself.

When the Bee had finished his speech, there was first a

silence and then a few buzzes of anger, and then a murmured expression of plans and wishes. It must be admitted, their ideas of how to remedy the evil now for the first time suggested to them were very confused. Some wished Uncle Collins could come and manage all the bee-hives in the country, for they were sure he would let all the bees be queens, and then what a jolly time they would have!

And when the old Relation popped his head round the corner of the cell he was building, just to inquire, "What would be the fun of being queens, if there were no working-bees to wait on one?" the little coterie of rebels buzzed very loud, and told him he was a fool, for, of course, Uncle Collins would take care that the tyrant who had so long been queen, and the royal children, now ripening in their nurse-cells, should be made to wait on them while they lasted.

"And when they are finished?" persisted the old Relation, with a laugh.

"Buzz, buzz," was the answer; and the old Relation held his tongue.

Then another Bee suggested that it would, after all, be very awkward for them all to be queens; for who would make the honey and wax, and build the honeycombs, and nurse the children? Would it not be best, therefore, that there should be no queens whatever, but that they should all be working-bees?

But then the tiresome old Relation popped his head round the corner again, and said, he did not quite see how that change would benefit them, for were they all not working-bees already?—on which an indignant buzz was poured into his ear, and he retreated again to his work.

It was well that night at last come on, and the time arrived when the labours of the day were over, and sleep and silence must reign in the hive. With the dawn of the morning, however, the troubled thoughts unluckily returned, and the Traveller-bee and his companions kept occasional

clustering together in little groups, to talk over their wrongs and a remedy. Meantime, the rest of the hive were too busy to pay much attention to them, and so their idleness was not detected. But, at last, a few hot-headed youngsters grew so violent in their different opinions, that they lost all self-control, and a noisy quarrel would have broken out, but that the Traveller-bee flew to them, and suggested that, as they were grown up now, and could not all be turned into queens, they had best sally forth and try the republican experiment of all being working-bees without any queen whatever.

With so charming an idea in view, he easily persuaded them to leave the hive; and a very nice swarm they looked as they emerged into the open air, and dispersed about the garden to enjoy the early breeze. But a swarm of bees without a queen to lead them proved only a helpless crowd, after all. The first thing they attempted, when they had collected to consult, was to fix on the sort of place in which they should settle for a home.

"A garden, of course," says one. "A field," says another. "There is nothing like a hollow tree," remarked a third. "The roof of a good outhouse is best protected from wet," thought a fourth. "The branch of a tree leaves us most at liberty," cried a fifth. "I won't give up to anybody," shouted all.

They were in a prosperous way to settle, were they not?

"I am very angry with you," cried the Traveller-bee, at last; "half the morning is gone already, and here we are as unsettled as when we left the hive!"

"One would think you were going to be queen over us, to hear you talk," exclaimed the disputants. "If we choose to spend our time in quarrelling, what is that to you? Go and do as you please, yourself!"

And he did; for he was ashamed and unhappy; and he flew to the further extremity of the garden to hide his vexation; where seeing a clump of beautiful jonquils, he

dived at once into a flower to sooth himself by honey-gathering. Oh, how he enjoyed it! He loved the flowers and the honey-gathering more than ever, and began his accustomed murmur of delight, and had serious thoughts of going back at once to the hive as usual, when, as he was coming out of one of the golden cups, he met his old Relation coming out of another.

"Who would have thought to find you here alone?" said the old Relation. "Where are your companions?"

"I scarcely know; I left them outside the garden."

"What are they doing?"

". . . Quarrelling . . ." murmured the Traveller-bee.

"What about?"

"What they are to do."

"What a pleasant occupation for bees on a sunshiny morning!" said the old Relation, with a sly expression.

"Don't laugh at me, but tell me what to do," said the puzzled Traveller. "What Uncle Collins says about nature and our all being alike sounds very true, and yet somehow we do nothing but quarrel when we try to be all alike and equal."

"How old are you?" asked the old Relation.

"Seven days," answered the Traveller, in all the sauciness of youth and strength.

"And how old am I?"

"Many months, I am afraid."

"You are right, I am an oldish bee. Now, my dear friend, let us fight!"

"Not for the world. I am the stronger, and should hurt you."

"I wonder what makes you ask advice of a creature so much weaker than yourself?"

"Oh, what can your weakness have to do with your wisdom, my good old Relation? I consult you because I know you are wise; and I am humbled myself, and feel, that I am foolish."

MATRICULATION SELECTIONS

and young—strong and weak—wise and foolish—
s become, of our being alike and equal? But never
ve can manage. Now let us agree to live to-

h all my heart. But where shall we live?"

me first which of us is to decide, if we differ in
,"

shall; for you are wise."

Al! And who shall collect honey for food?"

Al, for I am strong."

well; and now you have made me a queen, and

LIT Told a working-bee! Ah! you foolish fellow, won't the
up e and the old queen do? Don't you see that if even
ran e live together, there must be a head to lead and
and o follow? How much more in the case of a
e!"

Swir-T was the song of the Traveller-bee as he wheeled
-T flowers, joyously assenting to the truth of what he
is c.

as t to my companions," he cried at last. And the two
bright y together, and sought the knot of discontented
gard - bers outside the garden wall.

Li were still quarrelling, but no energy was left them;
mon e hungry and confused, and many had already
the y to work and go home as usual.

what. ery soon afterwards a cluster of happy, buzzing
other ded by the old Relation and the Traveller, were

It rning with wax-laden thighs to their hive.

to cli y were going to enter, they were stopped by one of
had e sentinels who watch the door-way.

by w " cried he; "a royal corpse is passing out!"

him o it was. A dead queen soon appeared in sight,
giant long by working-bees on each side, who, having

So to the edge of the hive-stand, threw her over for
but

respe is this? what has happened?" asked the Traveller-

bee, in a tone of deep anxiety and emotion. "Surely our queen is not dead?"

"Oh, no!" answered the sentinel; "but there has been some accidental confusion in the hive this morning. Some of the cell-keepers were unluckily absent, and a young queen-bee burst through her cell, which ought to have been blocked up for a few days longer. Of course, the two queens fought till one was dead; and, of course, the weaker one was killed. We shall not be able to send off a swarm quite so soon as usual this year; but these accidents can't be helped."

"But this one might have been helped," thought the Traveller-bee to himself, as with a pang of remorse he remembered that he had been the cause of the mischievous confusion.

"You see," buzzed the old Relation, nudging up against him—"you see even queens are not equal! and that there can be but one ruler at once!"

And the Traveller-bee murmured a heart-wrung "Yes".

RED SNOW.

“ And who art thou, that on the stool wouldst sit,
To judge at distance of a thousand miles,
With the short-sighted vision of a span ? ”

—CARY'S *Translation of Dante.*

LITTLE SIEGFRIED, the widow's son, climbed day by day up the hill which overlooked his mother's cottage and rambled about on the top, running after birds and insects, and gathering the beautiful wild flowers that grow on the Swiss Alps.

—There the dark blue gentians, and the Alpine rose, as it is called, and campanulas and salvias, are almost as common as the cowslips and daisies of English fields, and, from the brightness of their colours, make the hill-sides look like gardens, instead of uncultivated ground.

Little Siegfried's father had been killed in battle some months before his child's birth, and so, when he came into the world, he was cradled in tears instead of smiles, and what wonder if he grew up less thoughtless and gay than other boys of his age.

It was his mother who had first shown Siegfried where to climb the hill, and where to find the finest flowers ; and had made him look at the hills still higher than their own, by which their valley was enclosed, and had pointed out to him Mont Blanc in the distance, looming like a shadowy giant in the sky.

So Siegfried never wearied of watching the huge mountain, but got to love it more and more, with a love mixed with respectful awe, and a feeling as if it had some sort of life

and consciousness. At last, one day, when his mother was putting his little basket in his hand, that he might go on the hill as usual to play, he asked her if he might go to the top of Mont Blanc instead, and if she would show him the way.

It was no wonder that the good widow smiled, as she told him that neither he nor she were able to climb up such a terrible mountain. So, kissing him lovingly, she said, "You must be a great strong man, Siegfried, before you can scramble up the heights of Mont Blanc; and even for great strong men the way is very dangerous. And even if you were there, you would find nothing but cold and snow and misery; neither life nor flowers: our own hills are as pleasant again."

So Siegfried went away with his basket; but instead of running about and picking flowers, he threw himself at once upon the ground, and looked at the mountain, and cried, for he felt very sorry at what his mother had said. Presently, however, he wiped his eyes, and looked again; then sprang up and stared before him as if surprised. All the distance was bathed in bright sunshine, and the air was more transparent than usual, and, lo! a round rosy-coloured patch was visible on the far-off snows. He had never seen it before. What could it be? He thought he knew; and running hastily down to the cottage threw open the door, and shouted in delight, "Mother! there is a rose on Mount Blanc!"

Siegfried's mother did not laugh now for she saw the child was excited; and she was grieved for him. Ah! he had only half the love that should have been his; she must console him as best she could; he was not like other boys, she knew—and thinking this, she took him on her knee, and tried to explain to him that it must be only some accidental light from the sky that caused the rosy patch, for that no vegetation of any kind grew on the sides of the snowy mountain; there could be no roses there; and she

knew that it often looked pink in the evening sun—only now it was not evening.

The next day was Sunday, and Siegfried was able to walk to the somewhat distant church, and even to repeat a few of the prayers, and listen, now and then, to bits of the sermon, when his mother thought there was something he could understand, and drew his attention to it.

But on this particular day there was no need for her to call his attention to the preacher; nay, had she been able, she would have been very glad to have prevented his hearing him at all. But how could he help hearing when the pastor, addressing his flock, asked if there was a single one, young or old, among them, who had not gazed hundreds and hundreds of times at the giant mountain of their land—the snow-covered, inaccessible heights of Mont Blanc?

Siegfried and his mother looked at each other, and his heart leapt within him, to think that now, at last, he should hear something about his mysterious friend; and, clasping his mother's hand tightly in his own, he listened for every word.

But, alas! for what he heard. The pastor, after describing the mountain in all the magnificence of its size and form, painted it as being, nevertheless, the region of hopeless desolation; the abode of everlasting lifelessness and despair. Cold, hard, insensible, what could rouse it from its death-like torpor? The life-giving sun shone upon it from day to day, from age to age; but no influence from its rays ever penetrated that frozen bosom. The dews fell upon it, the storms burst over it, equally in vain.

The next day, his mother would fain have persuaded him to remain below in the valley, and seek some new amusement, but finding she could not reconcile him to the idea of forsaking his favourite haunt, she gave way, though with a sigh; and so, after his little daily tasks and helps to her were ended, he climbed up the heights as usual.

It was well that he had promised his mother to tease her

no more about the matter. Otherwise, on that day, he would have made more fuss than ever, for, when the sun was at the highest, the rosy flush reappeared on the distant snow, only not now confined to one small patch, but spread in broad tracts of delicate colour, which threatened to cover the whole mountain with its Aurora-like tint.

Once or twice Siegfried's resolution to keep his promise nearly gave way, but he held out manfully even to the last, contenting himself, on his return into the valley, with inquiring of a neighbour's son, whom he met driving home his father's cattle, why some of the snow on the hills looked pink? At first the boy said he didn't know, but presently he recollected that he had heard it said, that red snow fell sometimes out of the sky. Very likely that was it; but what it was, or what became of it, he had no notion. Only it went away as it came. Nothing ever stopped on the hill but the snow that was always there.

Hearing this, Siegfried had no longer even a wish to speak to his mother about it. She would say it was because the mountain was so cold and hard, no good thing, even from heaven, could stay upon it!

And thus a day or two passed, and the tracts of rosy colour grew fainter, and finally disappeared as the farmer's son had said was always the case; and Siegfried never spoke about it again but sat on the hill-side daily, wondering and dreaming to himself.

But he was interrupted at last. One morning, when the snow looked colder and whiter than ever against the blue sky, and he had been sitting for awhile, with his face hidden by his hands, a voice he did not know called to him, asking what he was doing. And when he lifted up his eyes, a stranger stood between him and Mont Blanc.

A child always answers "Nothing" to such a question, for children never feel thinking to be doing anything. But the stranger would not be so easily satisfied, and smiling, persisted in his inquiries.

"What are you thinking of then, little boy? One must be either doing or thinking while one is awake. And I want you to talk to me. I have come from such a long way off, and am so weary."

Here the stranger seated himself by Siegfried's side on the grass.

"First," continued he, "I want you to tell me, if you can, whether I can get to the town of——, through the pretty valley here at the bottom of this hill? Then, I want you to tell me for whom you have picked this basket of flowers? Then, why you are on this wild hill-side alone? Then, what you think about when you cover up your face with your hands? Now, then, can I get to the town through the valley?"

The voice that asked was so good-natured, and the smile on the stranger's face so kind, that Siegfried was won at once, and looking full at his new friend and smiling himself; nodded assent to this first question.

"Does your nod always mean yes, little boy?" asked the stranger, amused.

Siegfried nodded again.

"Very good. Now we understand each other. Will you answer my other questions?"

Siegfried gave another nod, and then they both laughed, and the stranger went on:—

"For whom have you gathered the flowers?"

"For my mother."

"And why are you here alone?"

"To play."

"What, alone? Why?"

"I have nobody else to play with."

"And what is it you think of when you sit with your face covered up?"

Siegfried's heart melted within him, and, pointing by a sorrowful nod to the giant mountain, he answered, "I think of it"

"Of it? What can you find in it to think about?"

"I am so sorry for it!" cried little Siegfried, passionately; "so sorry it is so miserable and outcast, and that God will let nothing grow there, while we have all these flowers!"

And once more he tossed the flowers contemptuously out of the basket.

"Ah, little boy," said the stranger, putting his arm kindly round the child and drawing himself nearer to him. "You must answer another question now. Who put such strange fancies into your head? Who told you this about the poor mountain?"

"They all say so," murmured Siegfried. "The pastor preached about it on Sunday, and mother says so, too, and the farmer's son, and everybody; and I am so sorry, so very sorry!"

The young voice died away, as it were, in regret.

"And why do you care so much about the mountain, little boy?"

Siegfried looked up, puzzled for a moment, but very soon out came the simple, child-like answer, "I look at it so much when I come up here to play".

It was the stranger's turn now to feel his eyes moisten, as he thought of the solitary child sending out his heart into the inanimate creation round him. Extremely interested, therefore, he made a few more inquiries, and, by degrees, brought out a part, at any rate, of what Siegfried's mother and the pastor between them had told and taught of outcast countries and God-deserted men. All was confusion in the child's account, but the drift of it could easily be discovered.

Without making a single remark, however, the stranger smiled again, and said, quite cheerfully: "I will tell you a secret, little boy. Neither the pastor, nor your mother, nor the farmer's son, were ever up the mountain, I suspect, so they cannot know very very much about it."

"I wanted to go, but they would not let me," interposed Siegfried. "They said I was not able to get up."

"They said right," replied the stranger. "But I, you see, am older and stronger, and could go; and I have been."

Quietly as he purposely spoke, the effect of what he said was, as he expected, very great. Siegfried jumped up; then sat down; then once more started from his seat, and was far more anxious to run down the hill and tell his mother the news, than to remain quietly where he was, and hear what more the stranger had to tell. He allowed himself to be controlled, however, and his friend went on talking as if he had not been interrupted.

"And the place is neither lifeless nor deserted. God sends it the beautiful red snow plant instead of flowers. I have been gathering it for days."

As he spoke, he unfastened from the leathern strap that went across his shoulders a small tin box, and, opening it for a moment, let Siegfried peep at a bright carmine-coloured mass of something within.

The child was speechless at first, overpowered by admiration and delight, but presently exclaimed, "Then that was what I saw!" adding, gently, "And it really came down from Heaven, then?" He was thinking of what the farmer's son had said.

"All good things come from Heaven," answered the stranger. "But this is as much a plant as the Alpine rose by your side. It did not drop down from the sky, but grows in the very snow itself, and covers over miles and miles of the hill you thought so desolate. God sends good things everywhere, though not everywhere alike."

Oh, the joy of such a doctrine! The simplest child could understand it, and be glad! All was explained now, too; the rosy patch and the broad tracts of colour were both accounted for, and Siegfried was as happy as he now believed the mountain to be. And, embracing his new friend, he forthwith began such a blundering account of what he, and his mother, and the farmer's boy, had thought about the rosy patch, that the stranger could do nothing but laugh,

and at last stopped him by exclaiming : " Then you see you were all wrong ; but never mind. Take me to your mother's cottage, and we will tell her all about it, too, and I will show it to you both, for even you have not really seen it yet."

Siegfried's mother welcomed the friendly stranger whom her son brought to her door with all the heartiness of a Swiss welcome ; and not the less when she found he was an English traveller, on his way to a neighbouring town to visit a well-known officer there, who had been deprived of a limb in the same action in which Siegfried's father had lost his life.

And as the town was but a few miles off, and the summer evenings so long, the stranger was easily persuaded to rest a few hours in the Swiss cottage, and tell the widow and her son the history of his adventures on Mont Blanc, and of the red-snow plant he had brought from it. Not that telling its history only would have been enough, nor was there anything either beautiful or wonderful-looking in the red, jelly-like mass in the tin box, when looked at only with the naked eye. The stranger had far more in store for them than that.

" I am going to show you," he began at last, and after busying himself in unpacking that revealer of secrets, a microscope, " that God has sent many more gracious things into the world than people commonly think ; because so many more than our natural eyes are able to see."

As he spoke he finished the last adjustment of the microscope, and touching the red jelly in the tin box with the fine point of a porcupine's quill, he placed the tiny morsel so obtained in a glass, to be looked at, and called to Siegfried to have the first peep.

The widow, struck as she had been with the stranger's words, had her own doubts as to what there could be to be seen, for she had not been able to detect anything on the porcupine's quill, but she said nothing, and very soon Siegfried's shouts of delight announced that something, at any rate, was there.

And, truly, what there was was a very pretty sight. Ten or fifteen bright little red balls, and a few colourless ones among them, were lying like gems in the drop or two of water which had been put in to keep them separate.

The child believed, at once, but at the first moment the mother could scarcely credit what she saw. That this should be a bit of the shapeless stuff she had looked at in the tin box—it was marvellous indeed.

The stranger now proceeded to explain. He told them that each of the red balls was a plant perfect in itself. That it was a little colourless bag, finer than gold-beater's skin, filled with a red substance, which shone through. That, as soon as it was full grown, the red substance within divided into four, eight, and sometimes sixteen separate red balls, of course of the tiniest size possible, all which immediately began to grow very fast, and grew, and grew, and grew, till the little bag in which they lived could hold them no longer, but burst, and dropped them out.

"These," said he, "are the young plants; and when each of them is full grown, the same thing happens again. The red substance in each divides into other tiny balls, and, as these grow, they burst out from the parent bag (called a cell, properly), and begin life for themselves. And thus comes another generation of the ball-like plants, and so another and another; and all this so quickly, that, in a few hours, millions of them have sprung from a few single cells. So now, little Siegfried, you know why, when you looked the second time at the rosy patch, it had spread into those great broad tracts of colour which, in fact, covered over miles of the poor snow with its beauty. It was no wonder, was it?"

Here he paused, and seeing little Siegfried looking wistfully at him, as if trying to understand, he took him on his knee caressingly, and said, "That microscope is a very curious thing, is it not?"

The child nodded his "Yes" as heartily as ever, and then

laid his head, contentedly, on his friend's shoulder, while he went on talking.

"Yes; it is very curious, for it shows us quantities of things we could not see without it; but the best lesson it teaches is, how much more there may be of which, even with its help, we can see and know nothing. In this life we cannot hope to know a hundredth part of the creations which surround us. You can believe this now, good Mother?"

"With all my heart," was her answer.

"And, further," he added, "you can judge now for yourself, that even of the things we do what we call see with the naked eye, there are a great many of which we can never know anything like the real truth, without such aid as this (pointing to the microscope). What was the red snow plant to you at first? A piece of shapeless jelly. What did it become to your more enlightened eye? A living organism endowed with a system of life peculiarly its own. This is something to have discovered, certainly, but is it all? Ah! as I tell it, I feel how imperfect the account is—how much remains behind. All we have done is but to have made a step or two out of complete ignorance.

" 'The rest remaineth unrevealed.' "

"Yet a glory comes into our hearts from the thought of the worlds beyond reach of our present senses like the reflection from lightning below our own horizon, and both faith and hope ought to be strengthened."

AN ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY.

It was four o'clock on a beautiful morning when we sallied from Astorga, or rather from its suburbs, in which we had been lodged. We directed our course to the north, in the direction of Galicia. Before us, at the distance of about a league and a half, rose a mighty frontier chain, its blue sides and broken and picturesque peaks still wearing a thin veil of the morning mist, which the fierce rays of the sun were fast dispelling. It seemed an enormous barrier, threatening to oppose our further progress, and it reminded me of the fables respecting the children of Magog, who are said to reside in remotest Tartary, behind a gigantic wall of rocks, which can only be passed by a gate of steel a thousand cubits in height.

We shortly after arrived at Manzanal, a village consisting of wretched huts, and exhibiting every sign of poverty and misery. Quitting Manzanal we soon arrived at the verge of a deep valley amongst mountains, not those of the chain which we had seen before us, and which we now left to the right, but those of the Telleno range, just before they unite with that chain. Round the sides of this valley, which exhibited something of the appearance of a horseshoe, wound the road in a circuitous manner. Just before us, however, and diverging from the road, lay a footpath which seemed, by a gradual descent, to lead across the valley, and to rejoin the road on the other side, at the distance of about a furlong; and into this we struck in order to avoid the circuit.

We had not gone far before we met two Galicians, on their

way to cut the harvests of Castile. One of them shouted, "Cavalier, turn back. In a moment you will be amongst precipices where your horses will break their necks; for we ourselves could scarcely climb them on foot." The other cried, "Cavalier, proceed, but be careful, and your horses, if sure-footed, will run no great danger. My comrade is a fool." A violent dispute instantly ensued between the two mountaineers, each supporting his opinion with loud oaths and curses.

Without stopping to see the result, I passed on; but the path was now filled with stones and huge slaty rocks, on which my horse was continually slipping. I likewise heard the sound of water in a deep gorge, which I had hitherto not perceived, and I soon saw that it would be worse than madness to proceed. I turned my horse, and was hastening to regain the path which I had left, when Antonio, my faithful Greek, pointed out to me a meadow by which, he said, we might regain the high-road much lower down than if we returned on our steps.

The meadow was brilliant with short green grass, and in the middle there was a small rivulet of water. I spurred my horse on, expecting to be in the high-road in a moment; the horse, however, snorted and stared wildly, and was evidently unwilling to cross the seemingly inviting spot. I thought that the scent of a wolf, or some other wild animal, might have disturbed him, but was soon undeceived by his sinking up to the knees in a bog. The animal uttered a shrill sharp neigh, and exhibited every sign of the greatest terror, making at the same time great efforts to extricate himself, and plunging forward, but every moment sinking deeper. At last he arrived where a small vein of rock showed itself. On this he placed his fore feet, and with one tremendous exertion freed himself from the deceitful soil, springing over the rivulet and alighting on comparatively firm ground, where he stood panting, his heaving sides covered with a foamy sweat. Antonio, who had observed the whole scene,

afraid to venture forward, returned by the path by which we came, and shortly afterwards rejoined me.

This adventure brought to my recollection the meadow with its footpath which tempted Christian from the straight road to heaven, and finally conducted him to the dominions of the Giant Despair.

We now began to descend the valley by a broad and excellent *carretera* or carriage road, which was cut out of the steep side of the mountain on our right. On our left was the gorge, down which tumbled the runnel of water which I have before mentioned. The road was tortuous, and at every turn the scene became more picturesque. The gorge gradually widened, and the brook at its bottom, fed by a multitude of springs, increased in volume and in sound, but it was soon far beneath us, pursuing its headlong course till it reached level ground, where it flowed in the midst of a beautiful but confined prairie.

At the bottom of the valley we entered a small village, washed by the brook, which had now swelled almost to a stream. A more romantic situation I had never witnessed. It was surrounded, and almost overhung, by mountains, and embowered in trees of various kinds; waters sounded, nightingales sang, and the cuckoo's full note boomed from the distant branches. But the village was miserable. The huts were built of slate stones, of which the neighbouring hills seemed to be principally composed, and roofed with the same, but not in the neat tidy manner of English houses; for the slates were of all sizes, and seemed to be flung on in confusion.

We proceeded on our way, which, for a considerable distance, lay along the margin of the stream, which now fell in small cataracts, now brawled over stones, and at other times ran dark and silent through deep pools overhung with tall willow-pools which seemed to abound with the finny tribe; for large trout frequently sprang from the water, catching the brilliant flies which skimmed along its deceitful surface. The scene was delightful.

Three hours passed away. We had halted and refreshed ourselves and our horses at Bembibre, a village of mud and slate, one which possessed little to attract attention. We were now ascending, for the road was over one of the extreme ledges of the frontier hills. But the aspect of heaven had blackened, clouds were rolling rapidly from the west over the mountains, and a cold wind was moaning dismally. "There is a storm travelling through the air," said a peasant, whom we overtook, mounted on a wretched mule; "and the Asturians had better be on the lookout, for it is speeding in their direction."

He had scarcely spoken when a light, so vivid and dazzling that it seemed as if the whole lustre of the fiery element were concentrated in it, broke around us, filling the whole atmosphere, and covering rock, tree, and mountain with a glare not to be described. The mule of the peasant tumbled prostrate, and, turning round, dashed down the hill at headlong speed, which for some time it was impossible to check. The lightning was followed by a peal almost as terrible, but distant, for it sounded hollow and deep; the hills, however, caught up its voice, seemingly repeating it from summit to summit, till it was lost in interminable space. Other flashes and peals succeeded, but were slight in comparison, and a few drops of rain descended. The body of the tempest seemed to be over another region. "A hundred families are weeping where that bolt fell," said the peasant, when I rejoined him, "for its blaze has blinded my mule at six leagues' distance." He was leading the animal by the bridle, as its sight was evidently affected.

Hours again passed away. It was now night, and we were in the midst of woodlands, feeling our way; for the darkness was so great that I could scarcely see the length of a yard before my horse's head. The animal seemed uneasy, and would frequently stop short, prick up his ears, and utter a low mournful whine. Flashes of sheet lightning frequently illumined the black sky, and flung a momentary glare over

our path. No sound interrupted the stillness of the night, except the slow tramp of the horses' hoofs, and occasionally the croaking of frogs from some pool or morass. My horse, from either weariness or the badness of the road, frequently stumbled; whereupon I dismounted, and leading him by the bridle, soon left Antonio far in the rear.

This nocturnal journey endured so long that I almost lost all hope of reaching the town, and had closed my eyes in a doze, though I still trudged on mechanically leading the horse. Suddenly a voice at a slight distance before me roared out, "Quien vive?" for I had at last found my way to Villafranca.

EARLY RISING.

HITHERTO I have addressed you chiefly relative to things to be avoided: let me now turn to the things which you ought to do. And, first of all, the husbanding of your time. The respect that you will receive, the real and sincere respect, will depend entirely on what you are able to do. If you be rich, you may purchase what is called respect; but it is not worth having. To obtain respect worth possessing you must, as I observed before, do more than the common run of men in your state of life; and, to be enabled to do this, you must manage well your time, and, to manage it well, you must have as much of the daylight and as little of the candle light as is consistent with the due discharge of your duties. When people get into the habit of sitting up merely for the purpose of talking, it is no easy matter to break themselves off it, and if they do not go to bed early they cannot rise early. Young people require more sleep than those that are grown up: there must be the number of hours, and that number cannot well be, on an average, less than eight; and if it be more in winter time it is all the better; for an hour in bed is better than an hour spent over fire and candle in an idle gossip. People never should sit talking till they do not know what to talk about. It is said by the country people that one hour's sleep before midnight is worth more than two are worth after midnight; and this I believe to be a fact; but it is useless to go to bed early, and even to rise early, if the time be not well employed after rising. In general half the morning is loitered away, the party being in a sort of half-dressed, half-naked state; out of

bed, indeed, but still in a sort of bedding. Those who first invented morning-gowns and slippers could have very little else to do. These things are very suitable to those who have had fortunes gained for them by others; very suitable to those who have nothing to do, and who merely live for the purpose of assisting to consume the produce of the earth; but he who has his bread to earn, or who means to be worthy of respect on account of his labours, has no business with morning-gown and slippers. In short, be your business or calling what it may, dress at once for the day; and learn to do it as quickly as possible.

Trifling as this matter appears upon naming it, it is, in fact, one of the great concerns of life; and, for my part, I can truly say, that I owe more of my great labours to my strict adherence to the precepts that I have here given you, than to all the natural abilities with which I have been endowed; for these, whatever may have been their amount, would have been of comparatively little use, even aided by great sobriety and abstinence, if I had not, in early life, contracted the blessed habit of husbanding well my time. To this, more than to any other thing, I owed my very extraordinary promotion in the army. I was always ready: if I had to mount guard at ten, I was ready at nine: never did any man, or anything, wait one moment for me. Being, at an age under twenty years, raised from corporal to sergeant-major at once over the heads of thirty sergeants, I naturally should have been an object of envy and hatred; but this habit of early rising and of rigid adherence to the precepts which I have given you, really subdued these passions; because everyone felt that what I did he had never done, and never could do. Before my promotion, a clerk was wanted to make out the morning report of the regiment. I rendered the clerk unnecessary; and long before any other man was dressed for the parade, my work for the morning was all done, and I myself was on the parade, walking, in fine weather, for an hour perhaps. My custom was this: to get up, in

summer, at daylight, in winter at four o'clock; shave, dress even to the putting of my sword-belt over my shoulder, and having my sword lying on the table before me, ready to hang by my side. Then I ate a bit of cheese, or pork, and bread. Then I prepared my report, which was filled up as fast as the companies brought me in the materials. After this I had an hour or two to read, before the time came for any duty out of doors, unless when the regiment or part of it went out to exercise in the morning. When this was the case, and the matter was left to me, I always had it on the ground in such time as that the bayonets glistened in the rising sun, a sight which gave me delight, of which I often think, but which I should in vain endeavour to describe. If the officers were to go out, eight or ten o'clock was the hour, sweating the men in the heat of the day, breaking in upon the time for cooking their dinner, putting all things out of order and all men out of humour. When I was commander, the men had a long day of leisure before them: they could ramble into the town or into the woods; go to get raspberries, to catch birds, to catch fish, or to pursue any other recreation, and such of them as chose, and were qualified, to work at their trades. So that here, arising solely from the early habits of one very young man, were pleasant and happy days given to hundreds.

Money is said to be power, which is, in some cases, true; and the same may be said of knowledge: but superior sobriety, industry, and activity are a still more certain source of power; for without these, knowledge is of little use; and as to the power which money gives, it is that of brute force, it is the power of the bludgeon and the bayonet, and of the bribed press, tongue, and pen. Superior sobriety, industry, activity, though accompanied with but a moderate portion of knowledge, command respect, because they have great and visible influence. The drunken, the lazy, and the inert, stand abashed before the sober and the active. Besides, all those whose interests are at stake prefer, of necessity, those

whose exertions produce the greatest and most immediate and visible effect. Self-interest is no respecter of persons: it asks, not who knows best what ought to be done, but who is most likely to do it; we may, and often do admire the talents of lazy and even dissipated men, but we do not trust them with the care of our interests. If, therefore you would have respect and influence in the circle in which you move, be more sober, more industrious, more active than the general run of those amongst whom you live.

As to education, this word is now applied exclusively to things which are taught in schools; but education means rearing up, and the French speak of the education of pigs and sheep. In a very famous French book on rural affairs, there is a chapter entitled "Education du Cochon," that is education of the hog. The word has the same meaning in both languages, for both take it from the Latin. Neither is the word learning properly confined to things taught in schools, or by books, for learning means knowledge; and but a comparatively small part of useful knowledge comes from books. Men are not to be called ignorant merely because they cannot make upon paper certain marks with a pen, or because they do not know the meaning of such marks when made by others. A ploughman may be very learned in his line, though he does not know what the letters p-l-o-u-g-h mean when he sees them combined upon paper. The first thing to be required of a man is, that he understand well his own calling or profession; and be you in what state of life you may, to acquire this knowledge ought to be your first and greatest care.

READING.

ANOTHER mode of spending the leisure time is that of books. Rational and well-informed companions may be still more instructive; but books never annoy, they cost little, and they are always at hand, and ready at your call. The sort of books must, in some degree, depend upon your pursuit in life; but there are some books necessary to every one who aims at the character of a well-informed man. I have slightly mentioned history and geography in the preceding letter; but I must here observe, that as to both these, you should begin with your own country, and make yourself well acquainted, not only with its ancient state, but with the origin of all its principal institutions. To read of the battles which it has fought, and of the intrigues by which one king or one minister has succeeded another, is very little more profitable than the reading of a romance.

History has been described as affording arguments of experience, as a record of what has been, in order to guide us as to what is likely to be, or what ought to be; but from this romancing history no such experience is to be derived: for it furnishes no facts on which to found arguments relative to the existing or future state of things. To come at the true history of a country, you must read its laws: you must read books treating of its usages and customs in former times; and you must particularly inform yourself as to prices of labour and of food.

History, however, is by no means the only thing about which every man's leisure furnishes him with the means of reading; besides which every man has not the same taste.

Poetry, Geography, Moral Essays, the divers subjects of Philosophy, Travels, Natural History, books on Sciences, and, in short, the whole range of book-knowledge is before you; but there is one thing always to be guarded against, and that is, not to admire and applaud anything you read, merely because it is the fashion to admire and applaud it. Read, consider well what you read, form your own judgment, and stand by that judgment in despite of the sayings of what are called learned men, until fact or argument be offered to convince you of your error. One writer praises another; and it is very possible for writers so to combine as to cry down and, in some sort, to destroy the reputation of anyone who meddles with the combination, unless the person thus assailed be blessed with uncommon talent and uncommon perseverance. When I read the works of Pope and of Swift, I was greatly delighted with their lashing of Dennis; but wondered, at the same time, why they should have taken so much pains in running down such a fool. By the merest accident in the world, being at a tavern in the woods of America, I took up an old book, in order to pass away the time while my travelling companions were drinking in the next room; but seeing the book contained the criticisms of Dennis, I was about to lay it down, when the play of "Cato" caught my eye; and, having been accustomed to read books in which this play was lauded to the skies, and knowing it to have been written by Addison, every line of whose works I had been taught to believe teemed with wisdom and genius, I condescended to begin to read, though the work was from the pen of that fool Dennis. I read on, and soon began to laugh, not at Dennis, but at Addison. I laughed so much and so loud that the landlord, who was in the passage, came in to see what I was laughing at. In short, I found it a most masterly production, one of the most witty things that I had ever read in my life. I was delighted with Dennis, and was heartily ashamed of my former admiration of "Cato," and felt no little resentment

against Pope and Swift for their endless reviling of this most able and witty critic. This, as far as I recollect, was the first emancipation that had assisted me in my reading. I have, since that time, never taken anything upon trust; I have judged for myself, trusting neither to the opinions of writers nor in the fashions of the day. Having been told by Dr. Blair, in his "Lectures on Rhetoric," that if I meant to write correctly, I must "give my days and nights to Addison," I read a few numbers of the "Spectator" at the time I was writing my "English Grammar"; I gave neither my nights nor my days to him, but I found an abundance of matter to afford examples of false grammar; and upon a re-persual, I found that the criticisms of Dennis might have been extended to this book too.

Besides reading, a young man ought to write, if he have the capacity and the leisure. If you wish to remember a thing well, put it into writing, even if you burn the paper immediately after you have done; for the eye greatly assists the mind. Memory consists of a concatenation of ideas, the place, the time, and other circumstances, lead to the recollection of facts; and no circumstance more effectually than stating the facts upon paper. A journal should be kept by every young man. Put down something against every day in the year, if it be merely a description of the weather. You will not have done this for one year without finding the benefit of it. It disburdens the mind of many things to be recollected, it is amusing and useful, and ought by no means to be neglected. How often does it happen that we cannot make a statement of facts, sometimes very interesting to ourselves and our friends, for the want of record of the places where we were, and of things that occurred on such and such a day! How often does it happen that we get into disagreeable disputes about things that have passed, and about the time and other circumstances attending them! As a thing of mere curiosity it is of some value, and may frequently prove of very great utility. It demands not

more than a minute in the twenty-four hours ; and that minute is most agreeably and advantageously employed. It tends greatly to produce regularity in the conducting of affairs ; it is a thing demanding a small portion of attention once in every day ; I myself have found it to be attended with great and numerous benefits ; and I therefore strongly recommend it to the practice of every reader.

RURAL LIFE IN ENGLAND.

Oh! friendly to the best pursuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,
Domestic life in rural pleasures past!

—COWPER.

THE stranger who would form a correct opinion of the English character, must not confine his observations to the Metropolis. He must go forth into the country; he must sojourn in villages and hamlets; he must visit castles, villas, farm-houses, cottages; he must wander through parks and gardens; along hedges and green lanes; he must loiter about country churches; attend wakes and fairs, and other rural festivals; and cope with the people in all their conditions, and all their habits and humours.

In some countries the large cities absorb the wealth and fashion of the nation: they are the only fixed abodes of elegant and intelligent society, and the country is inhabited almost entirely by boorish peasantry. In England, on the contrary, the Metropolis is a mere gathering-place, or general rendezvous of the polite classes, where they devote a small portion of the year to a hurry of gaiety and dissipation, and having indulged this kind of carnival, return again to the apparently more congenial habits of rural life. The various orders of society are therefore diffused over the whole surface of the kingdom, and the most retired neighbourhoods afford specimens of the different ranks.

The English, in fact, are strongly gifted with the rural feeling. They possess a quick sensibility to the beauties of nature, and a keen relish for the pleasures and employments

of the country. This passion seems inherent in them. Even the inhabitants of cities, born and brought up among brick walls and bustling streets, enter with facility into rural habits, and evince a tact for rural occupation. The merchant has his snug retreat in the vicinity of the Metropolis, where he often displays as much pride and zeal in the cultivation of his flower-garden, and the maturing of his fruits, as he does in the conduct of his business and the success of a commercial enterprise. Even those less fortunate individuals, who are doomed to pass their lives in the midst of din and traffic, contrive to have something that shall remind them of the green aspect of nature. In the most dark and dingy quarters of the city, the drawing-room window resembles frequently a bank of flowers; every spot capable of vegetation has its grass-plot and flower-bed; and every square its mimic park, laid out with picturesque taste, and gleaming with refreshing verdure.

Those who see the Englishman only in town are apt to form an unfavourable opinion of his social character. He is either absorbed in business, or distracted by the thousand engagements that dissipate time, thought, and feeling, in this huge Metropolis. He has, therefore, too commonly a look of hurry and abstraction. Wherever he happens to be, he is on the point of going somewhere else; at the moment he is talking on one subject, his mind is wandering to another; and while paying a friendly visit, he is calculating how he shall economize time so as to pay the other visits allotted in the morning. An immense Metropolis, like London, is calculated to make men selfish and uninteresting. In their casual and transient meetings they can but deal briefly in common-places. They present but the cold superficies of character—its rich and genial qualities have no time to be warmed into a glow.

It is in the country that the Englishman gives scope to his natural feelings. He breaks loose gladly from the cold formalities and negative civilities of town; throws off his

habits of shy reserve, and becomes joyous and free-hearted. He manages to collect round him all the conveniences and elegancies of polite life, and to banish its restraints. His country-seat abounds with every requisite, either for studious retirement, tasteful gratification, or rural exercise. Books, paintings, music, horses, dogs, and sporting implements of all kinds, are at hand. He puts no constraint either upon his guests or himself, but in the true spirit of hospitality provides the means of enjoyment, and leaves every one to partake according to his inclination.

The taste of the English in the cultivation of land, and in what is called landscape gardening, is unrivalled. They have studied nature intently and discovered an exquisite sense of her beautiful forms and harmonious combinations. Those charms which in other countries she lavishes in wild solitudes, are here assembled round the haunts of domestic life. They seem to have caught her coy and furtive graces, and spread them, like witchery, about their rural abodes.

Nothing can be more imposing than the magnificence of English park scenery. Vast lawns that extend like sheets of vivid green, with here and there clumps of gigantic trees, heaping up rich piles of foliage: the solemn pomp of groves and woodland glades, with the deer trooping in silent herds across them; the hare, bounding away to the covert; or the pheasant suddenly bursting upon the wing; the brook, taught to wind in natural meanderings, or expand into a glassy lake; the sequestered pool, reflecting the quivering trees, with the yellow leaf sleeping on its bosom, and the trout roaming fearlessly about its limpid waters, while some rustic temple or sylvan statue, grown green and dank with age, gives an air of classic sanctity to the seclusion.

These are but a few of the features of park scenery; but what most delights me, is the creative talent with which the English decorate the unostentatious abodes of middle life. The rudest habitation, the most unpromising and

scanty portion of land, in the hands of an Englishman of taste, becomes a little paradise. With a nicely discriminating eye, he seizes at once upon its capabilities, and pictures in his mind the future landscape. The sterile spot grows into loveliness under his hand; and yet the operations of art which produce the effect are scarcely to be perceived. The cherishing and training of some trees; the cautious pruning of others; the nice distribution of flowers and plants, of tender and graceful foliage; the introduction of a green slope of velvet turf; the partial opening to a peep of blue distance, or silver gleam of water: all these are managed with a delicate tact, a pervading yet quiet assiduity, like the magic touchings with which a painter finishes up a favourite picture.

The residence of people of fortune and refinement in the country has diffused a degree of taste and elegance in rural economy, that descends to the lowest class. The very labourer, with his thatched cottage and narrow slip of ground, attends to their embellishment. The trim hedge, the grass-plot before the door, the little flower-bed bordered with snug box, the woodbine trained up against the wall, and hanging its blossoms about the lattice, the pot of flowers in the window, the holly, providentially planted about the house, to cheat winter of its dreariness, and to throw in a semblance of green summer to cheer the fireside: all these bespeak the influence of taste, flowing down from high sources, and pervading the lowest levels of the public mind. If ever Love, as poets sing, delights to visit a cottage, it must be the cottage of an English peasant.

The fondness for rural life among the higher classes of the English has had a great and salutary effect upon the national character. I do not know a finer race of men than the English gentlemen. Instead of the softness and effeminacy which characterize the men of rank in most countries, they exhibit a union of elegance and strength, a robustness of frame and freshness of complexion, which

I am inclined to attribute to their living so much in the open air, and pursuing so eagerly the invigorating recreations of the country. These hardy exercises produce also a healthful tone of mind and spirits, and a manliness and simplicity of manners, which even the follies, and dissipations of the town cannot easily pervert, and can never entirely destroy. In the country, too, the different orders of society seem to approach more freely, to be more disposed to blend and operate favourably upon each other. The distinctions between them do not appear to be so marked and impassable as in the cities. The manner in which property has been distributed into small estates and farms has established a regular gradation from the nobleman, through the classes of gentry, small landed proprietors, and substantial farmers, down to the labouring peasantry, and while it has thus banded the extremes of society together, has infused into each intermediate rank a spirit of independence. This it must be confessed is not so universally the case at present as it was formerly; the larger estates having, in late years of distress, absorbed the smaller; and in some parts of the country, almost annihilated the sturdy race of small farmers. These, however, I believe, are but casual breaks in the general system I have mentioned.

In rural occupation there is nothing mean and debasing. It leads a man forth among scenes of natural grandeur and beauty; it leaves him to the workings of his own mind, operated upon by the purest and most elevating of external influences. Such a man may be simple and rough, but he cannot be vulgar. The man of refinement, therefore, finds nothing revolting in an intercourse with the lower orders in rural life, as he does when he casually mingles with the lower orders of cities. He lays aside his distance and reserve, and is glad to waive the distinctions of rank, and to enter into the honest, heartfelt enjoyments of common life. Indeed, the very amusements of the country, bring men more

and more together ; and the sound of hound and horn blend all feelings into harmony. I believe this is one great reason why the nobility and gentry are more popular among the inferior orders in England than they are in any other country ; and why the latter have endured so many excessive pressures and extremities, without repining more generally at the unequal distribution of fortune and privilege.

To this mingling of cultivated and rustic society may also be attributed the rural feeling that runs through British literature ; the frequent use of illustrations from rural life ; those incomparable descriptions of nature that abound in the British poets, that have continued down from "The Flower and the Leaf" of Chaucer, and have brought into our closets all the freshness and fragrance of the dewy landscape. The pastoral writers of other countries appear as if they had paid nature an occasional visit and become acquainted with her general charms ; but the British poets have lived and revelled with her—they have wooed her in her most secret haunts—they have watched her minutest caprices. A spray could not tremble in the breeze—a leaf could not rustle to the ground—a diamond drop could not patter in the stream—a fragrance could not exhale from the humble violet nor a daisy unfold its crimson tints to the morning, but it has been noticed by these impassioned and delicate observers, and wrought up into some beautiful morality.

The effect of this devotion of elegant minds to rural occupations has been wonderful on the face of the country. A great part of the island is rather level, and would be monotonous, were it not for the charms of culture : but it is studded and gemmed, as it were, with castles and palaces, and embroidered with parks and gardens. It does not abound in grand and sublime prospects, but rather in little home scenes of rural repose and sheltered quiet. Every antique farm-house and moss-grown cottage is a picture ;

and as the roads are continually winding, and the view is shut in by groves and hedges, the eye is delighted by a continual succession of small landscapes of captivating loveliness.

The great charm, however, of English scenery is the moral feeling that seems to pervade it. It is associated in the mind with ideas of order, of quiet, of sober, well-established principles, of hoary usage and reverend custom. Everything seems to be the growth of ages of regular and peaceful existence. The old church of remote architecture, with its low, massive portal, its Gothic tower, its windows rich with tracery and painted glass, in scrupulous preservation, its stately monuments of warriors and worthies of the olden time, ancestors of the present lords of the soil; its tombstones, recording successive generations of sturdy yeomanry, whose progeny still plough the same fields, and kneel at the same altar—the parsonage, a quaint, irregular pile, partly antiquated, but repaired and altered in the tastes of various ages and occupants—the stile and footpath leading from the churchyard, across pleasant fields, and along shady hedge-rows, according to an immemorial right of way—the neighbouring village, with its venerable cottages, its public green sheltered by trees under which the forefathers of the present race have sported—the antique family mansion, standing apart in some little rural domain, but looking down with a protecting air on the surrounding scene: all these common features of English landscape evince a calm and settled security, and hereditary transmission of home-bred virtues and local attachments, that speak deeply and touchingly for the moral character of the nation.

It is a pleasing sight of a Sunday morning when the bell is sending its sober melody across the quiet fields, to behold the peasantry in their best finery, with ruddy faces and modest cheerfulness thronging tranquilly along the green lanes to church; but it is still more pleasing to see them

in the evenings, gathering about their cottage doors, and appearing to exult in the humble comforts and embellishments which their own hands have spread around them.

It is this sweet home-feeling, this settled repose of affection in the domestic scene, that is, after all, the parent of the steadiest virtues and purest enjoyments; and I cannot close these desultory remarks better than by quoting the words of a modern English poet who has depicted it with remarkable felicity:—

Through each gradation, from the castled hall,
The city dome, the villa crowned with shade,
But chief from modest mansions numberless,
In town or hamlet shelt'ring middle life
Down to the cottaged vale, and straw roof'd shed;
This western isle hath long been famed for scenes
Where bliss domestic finds a dwelling-place;
Domestic bliss, that, like a harmless dove,
(Honour and sweet endearment keeping guard),
Can centre in a little quiet nest
All that desire would fly for through the earth;
That can, the world eluding, be itself
A world enjoyed; that wants no witnesses
But its own sharers, and approving heaven;
That, like a flower deep hid in rocky cleft,
Smiles, though 'tis looking only at the sky.

THE STORY OF ALADDIN; OR, THE WONDERFUL LAMP.

I. THE AFRICAN MAGICIAN.

IN one of the large and rich cities of China there once lived a tailor, named Mustapha. He was very poor. He could hardly, by his daily labour, maintain himself and his family, which consisted only of his wife and a son.

His son, who was called Aladdin, was a very careless and idle fellow. He was disobedient to his father and mother, and would go out early in the morning, and stay out all day, playing in the streets and public places with idle children of his own age.

When he was old enough to learn a trade his father took him into his own shop, and taught him how to use his needle; but all his father's endeavours to keep him to his work were vain, for no sooner was his back turned, than he was gone for that day. Mustapha chastised him, but Aladdin would not mend his ways. This so much troubled his father that he fell sick and died in a few months.

Aladdin, who was now no longer restrained by the fear of a father, gave himself entirely over to his idle habits. One day, when he was fifteen years old, as he was playing in the street with his evil companions, a stranger passing by stood and watched him.

This stranger was a sorcerer, known as the African magician, who but two days before had arrived from Africa, his native country.

The African magician, seeing something in Aladdin's face which showed him that he was the very boy for his

purpose, inquired his name and history of some of his companions. When he had learnt all he desired to know, he went up to him, and taking him aside from his comrades, said, "Child, was not your father called Mustapha the tailor?"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy, "but he has been dead a long time."

At these words the African magician threw his arms about Aladdin's neck, and with tears in his eyes, said: "I am your uncle. Your worthy father was my own brother. I knew you at first sight, you are so like him." Then he gave Aladdin a handful of small money, saying, "Go, my son, to your mother, give my love to her, and tell her that I will visit her to-morrow, so that I may see where my good brother lived so long, and ended his days".

Aladdin ran to his mother, delighted with the money his uncle had given him. "Mother," said he, "have I an uncle?" "No, child," replied his mother, "you have no uncle either on your father's side or on mine." "I have just come," said Aladdin, "from a man who says he is my uncle and my father's brother. He cried when I told him my father was dead, and gave me money, and sent his love to you." "Indeed, child," replied the mother, "your father had no brother, nor have you an uncle."

The next day the magician found Aladdin playing in another part of the town, and embracing him as before, put two pieces of gold into his hand and said to him: "Carry this, child, to your mother; tell her that I will come and see her this evening, and bid her get us something for supper, but first show me the house where you live".

Aladdin showed the African magician the house, and took the two pieces of gold to his mother, who went out and bought provisions. She spent the whole day in preparing the supper, and at night, when it was ready, said to her son: "Perhaps the stranger does not know how to find our house; go and bring him, if you meet with him".

Aladdin was just about to go, when the magician knocked at the door and came in, laden with wine and all sorts of fruits, which he brought for dessert. After he had given these into Aladdin's hands, he saluted his mother, and desired her to show him the place where his brother Mustapha used to sit. When she had so done he fell down and kissed it several times, crying out with tears in his eyes, "My poor brother! how unhappy am I, not to have come soon enough to give you one last embrace!"

Aladdin's mother desired him to sit down in the same place, but he declined. "No," said he, "I shall not do that; but give me leave to sit opposite to it, so that I may look upon the place where he used to sit."

When the magician had sat down, he entered into conversation with Aladdin's mother. "My good sister, said he, "do not be surprised because you have never seen me all the time you were married to my brother Mustapha of happy memory. I have been forty years absent from this country, which is my native place as well as my late brother's. During that time I have travelled into the Indies, Persia, Arabia, Syria, and Egypt, and afterwards crossed over into Africa, where I took up my abode. At last, feeling a desire to see my native country again, and to embrace my dear brother, I made the necessary preparations, and set out upon the journey. Nothing ever gave me so much pain as hearing of my brother's death. But heaven be praised for all things! It is a comfort for me to find my brother's son, who is so remarkably like him."

The African magician, perceiving that the widow wept at the remembrance of her husband, changed the conversation, and turning towards her son, asked him, "What business do you follow? Are you of any trade?"

At this question the youth hung down his head, and was not a little ashamed when his mother answered: "Aladdin is an idle fellow. His father, when alive, strove to teach him his trade, but could not succeed; and since his death,

notwithstanding all I can say to him, he does nothing but idle away his time in the streets, as though he were still a child. If you do not make him ashamed of it, I fear that he will never do any good. For my part, I am resolved, one of these days, to turn him out of doors, and let him provide for himself."

After these words, Aladdin's mother burst into tears; and the magician said: "This is not well, nephew; you must think how you are to earn a living. There are many sorts of trades; perhaps you do not like your father's and would prefer another; I will try to help you. If you do not want to learn a handicraft, I will take a shop for you, and furnish it with all sorts of fine stuffs and linens; and then you can live in an honourable way. Tell me freely what you think of my proposal; you will always find me ready to keep my word."

This plan just suited Aladdin, who hated hard work. He told the magician he had a greater inclination to that business than to any other, and that he would be very grateful to him for his kindness. "Well, then," said the African magician, "I will take you with me to-morrow, clothe you as handsomely as the best merchants in the city, and afterwards we will open a shop."

The widow, after his promises of kindness to her son, no longer doubted that the magician was her husband's brother, and she thanked him for his good intentions. Then she served up supper, at which they talked of several indifferent matters. After supper the magician took his leave and returned to his lodgings.

He came again the next day, as he had promised, and took Aladdin with him to a merchant, who sold all sorts of clothes and fine stuffs. He bade Aladdin choose those he liked, and paid the merchant for them.

When Aladdin found himself so handsomely dressed he thanked his uncle, who then showed him the city. He showed him the largest and finest mosques, the khans

or inns where the merchants and travellers lodged, and afterwards the sultan's palace. At last he took him to his own khan, and meeting some merchants, whom he knew there, he invited them to a feast to meet his nephew.

This entertainment lasted till night. When it was over Aladdin wished to take leave of his uncle and go home, but the magician would not let him go by himself. He conducted him to his mother, who, as soon as she saw him so well dressed, was filled with joy, and bestowed a thousand blessings upon the magician.

II. THE CAVE OF THE LAMP.

Early the next morning the magician called again for Aladdin, and said he would take him that day into the country, and on the next day he would purchase the shop. He then led him out at one of the gates of the city, to some splendid palaces, each of which was surrounded by beautiful gardens. At every building he came to, he asked Aladdin if he did not think it fine. The youth immediately cried, "Yes, but yonder is a finer house, uncle, than any we have yet seen". By this artifice, the cunning magician led Aladdin further and further into the country. But as he meant to take him still further, he sat down in one of the gardens, on the brink of a fountain of clear water which poured from the mouth of a bronze lion into a basin, pretending to be tired: "Come, nephew," said he, "you must be weary as well as I; let us rest ourselves, and we shall then be better able to continue our walk".

The magician next pulled from his girdle a packet of cakes and fruit, and while he and Aladdin made a short meal, he begged his nephew to give up bad company, and to seek that of wise and prudent men. When they had eaten as much as they wanted they got up and pursued their walk.

At last they came to a narrow valley between two moun-

tains of equal size, which was the place the magician had come all the way from Africa to see. "We will go no further row," said he to Aladdin; "I will show you here some extraordinary things. While I strike a light, gather up all the loose dry sticks you can see, and we will kindle a fire."

Aladdin soon collected a great heap of sticks. The magician set fire to them, and when they were in a blaze, threw some powder on them, saying several magic words which Aladdin did not understand.

He had scarcely done this when the earth opened at the magician's feet, and they saw below a stone with a brass ring fixed in it. Aladdin was so frightened that he would have run away, but the magician caught hold of him, and gave him such a box on the ear that he knocked him down. Aladdin got up trembling, and with tears in his eyes, said to the magician, "What have I done, uncle, to be treated in this severe manner?"

"I am your uncle," answered the magician; "I supply the place of your father, and you ought to make no reply. But, child," added he, softening, "do not be afraid; for all I ask is that you obey me. Know, then, that under this stone there is hidden a treasure, which shall be yours. It will make you richer than the greatest monarch in the world. No one but yourself can lift this stone or enter the cave; so you must do exactly what I tell you to."

Aladdin was amazed at all he saw and heard, but forgetting the blow his uncle had given him, he said, "Well, uncle, what is to be done? Command me, I am ready to obey."

"I am overjoyed, child," said the African magician, embracing him. "Take hold of the ring, and lift up that stone."

"Indeed, uncle," replied Aladdin, "I am not strong enough; you must help me."

"You will find that you can do it by yourself," answered the magician; "if I help you, we shall be able to do

nothing. Take hold of the ring, and lift it up; you will find it will come easily."

Aladdin did as the magician bade him, raised the stone with ease, and laid it on one side.

When the stone was pulled up, there appeared a staircase about three or four feet deep, leading to a door. "Go down

those steps, my son," said the African magician, "and open that door. It will lead you into a palace, divided into three great halls. In each of these you will see four large cisterns placed on each side, full of gold and silver, but take care you do not meddle with them. Before you enter the first hall, be sure to tuck up your robe, and pass through the second into the third without stopping. Be careful not to touch the walls,



for if you do, you will die instantly. At the end of the third hall, you will find a door which opens into a garden, planted with fine trees laden with fruit. Walk straight across the garden to a terrace, where you will find a lighted lamp. Take the lamp and put it out. When you have thrown away the wick and poured out the liquid in it, put it in your waist-band and bring it to me. Do not be afraid that the liquid will spoil your clothes; for it is not oil, and the lamp will be dry as soon as it is thrown out."

The magician then drew a ring from his finger, and put it on one of Aladdin's saying, "It is a talisman against all evil, so long as you obey me. Go, therefore, boldly, and we shall both be rich all our lives."

Aladdin descended the steps, and, opening the door, found the three halls, just as the African magician had said he would. He went through them with the caution that fear of death inspired, crossed the garden without stopping, took up the lamp, threw out the wick and the liquid, and put it in his waist-band. But as he came through the garden he stopped to look at the trees, which were laden with fruit of different colours. Some bore fruit entirely white, and some clear and transparent as crystal; some pale and others deep red; some green, blue, and purple, and others yellow; in short, there was fruit of all colours. The white were pearls; the clear and transparent, diamonds; the red, rubies; the green, emeralds; the blue, turquoises; the purple, amethysts; and the yellow, sapphires. Aladdin, ignorant of their value would have preferred figs, or grapes, or pomegranates; but as he had his uncle's permission, he resolved to gather some of them. Having filled two purses with them, he wrapped some up in the skirts of his coat, and crammed his bosom as full as it could hold.

Aladdin then returned through the three halls, and soon arrived at the mouth of the cave, where the African magician awaited him with the utmost impatience. As soon as Aladdin saw him, he cried out, "Pray, uncle, lend me your hand, to help me out". "Give me the lamp first," replied the magician; "it will be troublesome to you." "Indeed, uncle," answered Aladdin, "I cannot now, but I will as soon as I am up." The African magician would not help Aladdin till he gave up the lamp. Aladdin refused to give it to him till he was out of the cave. Provoked at this obstinate refusal, the African magician flew into a passion. He threw a little of his powder into the fire, and pronounced two magic words. Instantly the stone moved back into its place above

the staircase, just as it lay before the magician and Aladdin arrived.

This action plainly showed Aladdin that the magician was no uncle of his, but one who wished him evil. The truth was that the magician had learnt from his magic books the secret and the value of this wonderful lamp, the owner of which would be richer than any earthly ruler. Hence his journey to China. His art had told him, also, that he could not take it himself, but must receive it as a gift from the hands of another person. Hence he employed young Aladdin, and hoped by a mixture of kindness and authority to make him obedient to his will. Now that he had failed to obtain the lamp, he set out upon the return journey to Africa.

Aladdin, being left alone in darkness, called out to his uncle that he was ready to give him the lamp; but in vain, since his cries could not be heard. He walked to the bottom of the steps, intending to get into the palace; but the door, which was opened before by enchantment, was now shut by the same means. He then redoubled his cries and tears, and sat down on the steps without any hope of ever seeing light again. In this great emergency, he said, "There is no strength or power but in the great and high God"; and in joining his hands to pray he rubbed the ring which the magician had put on his finger. Immediately, a fearful genie appeared, and said, "What wouldst thou have? I am ready to obey thee. I serve him who possesses the ring."

At another time Aladdin would have been frightened at the sight of so terrible a being, but the danger he was in made him answer without hesitation, "Whoever thou art, deliver me from this place". He had no sooner spoken than he found himself on the very spot where the magician had last left him; nor could he see any sign of either cave or opening, nor disturbance of the earth. Returning thanks to find himself once more in the world, he made the best of his way home. When he got within his mother's door,

the joy of seeing hēr, and his weakness from want of food, made him so faint, that he lay for a long time as if dead.



The Slave of the Ring appears to Aladdin.

After a while he recovered, and then he told his mother what had happened to him.

III. THE GENIE OF THE LAMP.

Aladdin slept very soundly till late the next morning. When he awoke, the first thing he asked for was his breakfast. "Alas! child," said his mother, "I have not a bit of bread to give you; you ate up all the provisions I had in the house yesterday. But I have a little cotton, which I have spun; I will go and sell it, and buy bread, and something for our dinner." "Mother," replied Aladdin, "keep your cotton for another time, and give me the lamp I brought home with me yesterday; I will go and sell it, and the money I shall get for it will buy both breakfast and dinner, and perhaps supper too."

Aladdin's mother took the lamp, and said to her son, "Here it is, but it is very dirty; if it was a little cleaner, I believe it would be worth more." She took some fine sand and water to clean it; but the moment she began to rub it, a hideous genie of gigantic size appeared before her, and said to her in a voice of thunder, "What wouldst thou have? I am ready to obey thee as thy slave. I am the slave of the lamp."

Aladdin's mother was so terrified at the sight of the genie that she fainted. But Aladdin, who had already seen a similar genie in the cavern, snatched the lamp out of his mother's hand, and said to the genie boldly, "I am hungry, bring me something to eat". The genie disappeared, but immediately after returned with a large silver tray. Upon the tray were twelve silver dishes containing the most delicious foods, six large white loaves of bread on two plates, two flagons of wine, and two silver cups. All these he placed upon a carpet, and disappeared.

Aladdin fetched some water, and sprinkled it on his mother's face until she recovered from her swoon.

When his mother sat up she was much surprised to see the great tray, twelve dishes, six loaves, the two flagons, and cups, and to smell the savoury odour which came from the dishes. "Child," said she, to whom are we obliged for all this food?" "It is no matter, mother," said Aladdin. "Let us sit down and eat; when we have done I will tell you."

When the meal was finished, Aladdin's mother sat down by her son on the sofa, saying, "I expect you now to satisfy my curiosity, and tell me exactly what passed between the genie and you while I was in a swoon". This Aladdin readily did.

She was much amazed at what her son told her, and said, "But, son, what have we to do with genies? I have never even heard of them before, and I am sure none of my friends ever has. How came that vile genie to address himself to me, and not to you?" "Mother," answered Aladdin, "the genie you saw is not the one who appeared to me in the cave. If you remember, the one I first saw called himself the slave of the ring; but this one called himself the slave of the lamp."

"What!" cried the mother, "did that terrible genie come and speak to me because I rubbed the lamp? Take it out of my sight, my son. I would rather you sold it, than run the risk of being frightened to death by the genie again. If you will take my advice, you will also get rid of the ring, and have nothing to do with devils."

"With your leave, mother," replied Aladdin, "I will not sell the lamp, which may be of service both to you and me. That wicked magician would not have undertaken so long a journey if the lamp were not of great value. And since we have honestly come by it, let us make use of it. I hope you will give me leave to keep the ring also, and to wear it always on my finger."

Aladdin's mother replied that he might do what he pleased; for her part, she would have nothing to do with genies, and would never speak of them again.

The next day Aladdin put one of the silver dishes under his vest, and went out early to sell it. Then, with the money he obtained, he called at a baker's, bought some cakes of bread, and took them to his mother. One after another Aladdin sold the dishes, and he and his mother lived on the money thus obtained.

When all the dishes were sold, Aladdin brought out the lamp. He looked for the part which his mother had rubbed with sand, and rubbed the same place. The genie immediately appeared, and said, "What wouldst thou have? I am ready to obey thee as thy slave. I am the slave of the lamp." "I am hungry," said Aladdin, "bring me something to eat." The genie disappeared, and presently returned with a tray, on which were the same number of covered dishes as before, set them down, and vanished.

Though Aladdin and his mother had an inexhaustible treasure in their lamp, and could have had whatever they wished for, yet they lived with the same frugality as before.

Aladdin often went to the shops of the merchants, who sold cloth of gold, linens, silk stuffs, and jewellery, and by joining in their conversation, learnt a great deal of the world. By talking to the jewellers, he came to know that the fruits which he had gathered when he took the lamp were, instead of coloured glass, stones of great value: but he had the prudence not to mention this to anyone, not even to his mother.

One day as Aladdin was walking about the town, he heard an order proclaimed, commanding the people to shut up their shops and houses, and keep within doors, while the princess Buddir al Buddoor, the sultan's daughter, went to the bath and returned.

This proclamation roused in Aladdin an eager desire to see the princess's face, and he determined to place himself behind the door of the bath, so that he could not fail to see her.

Aladdin had not long concealed himself when the princess came. She was attended by a crowd of ladies, slaves, and mutes, who walked on each side of her and behind her.

When she came within three or four paces of the door of the bath, she took off her veil, and thus Aladdin obtained a full view of her face.

The princess was very beautiful, her eyes were large, lively and sparkling; her smile bewitching; her nose faultless; her mouth small. It is not therefore surprising that Aladdin was enchanted.

After the princess had passed by and entered the bath, Aladdin quitted his hiding-place and went home. His mother perceived him to be more thoughtful and melancholy than usual. She asked him what had happened to him, or if he was ill. He then told her of his adventure, and concluded by declaring, "I love the princess more than I can say, and am resolved that I will ask her in marriage of the sultan".

Aladdin's mother listened with amazement to her son's words, and when he talked of asking the princess in marriage she laughed aloud. "Alas! child," cried she, "what are you thinking of? You must be mad to talk thus."

"I assure you, mother," replied Aladdin, "that I am not mad, but in my right senses. I foresaw that you would reproach me with folly; but I must tell you once more that I am resolved to ask for the princess in marriage, nor do I despair of success. I have the slaves of the Lamp and of the Ring to help me, and you know how powerful their aid is. And I have another secret to tell you: those pieces of glass, which I got from the trees in the garden of the palace under the earth, are jewels of priceless value. All the precious stones the jewellers have in Bagdad are not to be compared with mine for size or beauty; and I am sure that the offer of them will secure the favour of the sultan. You have a large porcelain dish fit to hold them; fetch it, and let us see how they look when we lay them in it.

Aladdin took the jewels out of the two purses, and placed them on the dish, according to his fancy. Their brightness and lustre so dazzled the eyes both of mother and son, that they were astonished beyond measure. Aladdin's mother,

emboldened by the sight of the jewels, fell in with her son's wishes, and promised to go the next morning to the palace of the sultan. Aladdin rose before daybreak, and woke his mother, begging her to go early, and get into the palace before the grand vizier arrived.

Aladdin's mother took the dish of jewels, wrapped it in two fine napkins, and set forth for the sultan's palace. When she came to the gates, the grand vizier and the other viziers had just gone in; but although the palace was crowded with people, she managed to make her way to the divan. She placed herself just before the sultan, the grand vizier, and the great lords who sat in council on his right and left hand. Causes were called, and judgments were passed, till the time came for the divan to break up. Then the sultan rose and returned to his apartment, attended by the grand vizier. The other viziers and ministers of state also retired.

Aladdin's mother, seeing the sultan retire, and all the people depart, judged rightly that he would not sit again that day, and resolved to go home. On her arrival she said, with much simplicity: "Son, I saw the sultan, and am sure that he saw me too, for I placed myself just before him. But he was so much occupied with those who were on either side of him that I pitied him and wondered at his patience. At last, I believe, he was heartily tired, for he rose up suddenly, and would not hear a great many who were ready to speak to him, but went away, at which I was well pleased, for indeed I began to lose all patience, and was extremely fatigued with staying so long. But there is no harm done: I will go again to-morrow; perhaps the sultan may not be so busy."

For six days she went to the divan, and placed herself directly before the sultan, but with as little success as on the first morning.

On the sixth day, however, after the divan was broken up, when the sultan returned to his own apartment, he said

to his grand vizier: "I have for some time observed a certain woman, who attends every day that I give audience, with something wrapped up in a napkin. If this woman comes to our next audience, let her be called, so that I may hear what she has to say." The grand vizier answered by lowering his hand, and then lifting it above his head, signifying his willingness to lose it if he did not obey.

On the next audience day, when Aladdin's mother went to the divan, and placed herself in front of the sultan as usual, the grand vizier immediately called an officer, and pointing to her, bade him bring her before the sultan. The old woman at once followed the officer, and when she reached the sultan, bowed her head down to the carpet of the throne, and remained in that position till he bade her rise. Then he said to her, "Good woman, I have seen you standing here many days; what business brings you here?"

At these words, Aladdin's mother prostrated herself a second time; and when she arose, said, "Monarch of monarchs, I beg of you to pardon the boldness of my petition, and to assure me of your pardon and forgiveness." "Well," replied the sultan, "I will forgive you, be it what it may, and no harm shall come to you: speak boldly."

When Aladdin's mother had taken all these precautions for fear of the sultan's anger, she told him faithfully the errand on which her son had sent her, and how he had seen the face of the princess.

The sultan listened to her words without showing the least anger; but before he gave her any answer, asked her what she had brought tied up in the napkin. She lifted up the china dish which she had set down at the foot of the throne, untied it, and gave it into the sultan's hands.

The sultan's surprise, when he saw so many large, beautiful, and valuable jewels in the dish, was plainly written on his face. He gazed at them for some time, lost in admiration, and he felt a great desire to possess them.

"How rich, how beautiful!" he exclaimed, and after handling all the jewels, one after another, he turned to his grand vizier, and showing him the dish, said: "Behold, admire, wonder! and confess that your eyes never beheld jewels so rich and beautiful before. Is not such a present worthy of the princess my daughter? And ought I not to bestow her on one who values her so highly?"

"I must own," replied the grand vizier, "that the present is worthy of the princess; but I beg of your majesty to grant me three months before you resolve to give your daughter. I hope, before that time, my son, whom you have regarded with your favour, will be able to make a nobler present than this Aladdin, who is an utter stranger to your majesty."

The sultan granted this request, and said to the old woman: "Good woman, go home, and tell your son that I agree to the proposal you have made me; but I cannot marry the princess, my daughter, for three months; at the end of that time you may come again."

Aladdin's mother returned home and told her son with much joy the gracious answer she had received from the sultan's own mouth, and how she was to go to the divan again that day three months.

Aladdin thought himself the happiest of men when he heard this news, and he thanked his mother for the pains she had taken in the affair. From that time he counted every day, week, and every hour that passed. When two of three months were gone, his mother one evening, having no oil in the house, went out to buy some, and found a general rejoicing. The houses were gaily dressed with foliage, silks, and coloured cloth, and the streets were crowded with officers in their finest clothes, mounted on prancing horses, each attended by a great many footmen. Aladdin's mother asked the oil merchant what was the meaning of all these preparations. "Where have you come from, good woman?" said he. "Do you not know that the grand vizier's son is to marry the Princess Buddir al Buddoor, the sultan's

daughter, to-night? She will presently return from the bath; and these officers will attend her to the palace where the marriage will take place."

Aladdin's mother, on hearing this news, ran homē quickly. "Child," cried she, "all hope is gone! the sultan's fine promises will come to nought. This night the grand vizier's son is to marry the Princess Buddir al Buddoor."

For a moment Aladdin was thunderstruck, but he be-
thought himself of the lamp, and of the genie who had promised to obey him; and without indulging in idle words against the sultan, the vizier, or his son, he determined, if possible, to prevent the marriage.

When Aladdin had got into his chamber, he took the lamp, and rubbing it in the same place as before, the genie appeared, and said to him: "What wouldst thou have? I am ready to obey thee as thy slave; I am the slave of the lamp." "Hear me," said Aladdin, "thou hast hitherto obeyed me, but now I am about to set thee a harder task. The sultan's daughter, who was promised to me as my bride, is this night to be married to the son of the grand vizier. Bring them both to me immediately they retire to their bed-chamber."

"Master," replied the genie, "I obey you."

Aladdin supped with his mother, and then went to his own apartment, and sat up to await the return of the genie.

In the meantime, the festivities in honour of the princess's marriage were being held in the sultan's palace with great magnificence. When the ceremonies were at last over, the princess and her husband retired to the bedchamber prepared for them. No sooner had they entered it, and dismissed their attendants, than the genie, the faithful slave of the lamp, to the great amazement and alarm of the bride and bridegroom, took up the bed, and carried it in an instant into Aladdin's chamber, where he set it down. "Remove the bridegroom," said Aladdin to the genie, "and keep him a prisoner till dawn, and then bring him back here." When the princess

was left alone with Aladdin, she was terrified, but his kindness soon drove away her fears. He told her how the sultan, her father, had broken his promise, and how she was his promised bride. Then he left her until the morning. At break of day the genie appeared, bringing back the bridegroom, whom he had left at the door of Aladdin's chamber during the night. At Aladdin's bidding he bore the couch invisibly through walls and over house-tops, with the bride and bridegroom on it, back to the palace of the sultan.

The grand vizier's son was almost dead with cold through standing in his thin sleeping-garment all night.

When the sultan came to see the princess in the morning, he was much surprised to see her look so melancholy. She said nothing, only cast at him a sorrowful look. He suspected there was something extraordinary in this silence, and went immediately to the sultana's apartment, and told her how the princess had received him. "Sire," said the sultana, "I will go and see her; she will not receive me in the same manner."

The princess received her mother with sighs and tears, and signs of deep dejection. At last, pressed to tell all her thoughts, she described to the sultana all that had happened to her during the night. The sultana at once pointed out the necessity for silence and discretion, as no one would believe so strange a tale. The grand vizier's son agreed not to tell a soul, and the events of the night were not allowed to cast the least gloom on the festivities of the day.

When night came, the bride and bridegroom again went to their chamber. Aladdin had already given his commands to the genie of the lamp; and no sooner were they alone than their bed was removed in the same mysterious manner as on the preceding evening. After a night passed in the same unpleasant way, they were in the morning carried back to the palace of the sultan.

When the sultan came to see his daughter, the princess could no longer conceal how unhappy she was. She told him all that had happened to her. The sultan at once con-

sulted his grand vizier; and finding from him that his son had received even worse treatment than the princess, he declared the marriage to be cancelled, and an end was put to all rejoicing and festivity.

This sudden change in the mind of the sultan gave rise to various reports. Nobody but Aladdin knew the secret; and neither the sultan nor the grand vizier, who had forgotten Aladdin, had any idea that he had a hand in the strange adventures that befell the princess and her bridegroom.

IV. ALADDIN'S MARRIAGE.

On the very day that the three months expired, the mother of Aladdin again went to the palace, and stood in the same place in the divan. The sultan knew her again, and bade his vizier have her brought before him.

After prostrating herself before the sultan, she said: "Sire, I have come at the end of three months to remind you of the promise you made to my son". The sultan had dismissed the request from his mind, little thinking that he would hear any more of the matter. He therefore took counsel with his vizier, and at last he said: "Good woman, it is true a sultan ought to keep his word, and I am ready to keep mine, by making your son happy in marriage with the princess, my daughter. But I cannot marry her until I know that your son is rich enough to support her in a manner befitting a royal princess. You may tell him, that as soon as he sends me forty trays of solid gold, full of jewels like those you gave me, carried by forty black slaves, who shall be led by as many handsome white slaves, all dressed magnificently, he shall marry my daughter."

Then the sultan, feeling sure that Aladdin could not fulfil this request, dismissed the matter from his mind.

Aladdin's mother prostrated herself before the sultan's throne, and retired. On her way home, she laughed as she thought of her son's folly. "Where," said she, "can

he get so many large gold trays, and such precious stones to fill them? It is altogether out of his power, and I believe he will not be much pleased with my message this time." When she came home full of these thoughts, she gave Aladdin the sultan's message. "The sultan expects your answer immediately," said she; and then added, laughing, "I believe he may wait long enough!"

"Not so long, mother, as you imagine," replied Aladdin. "This demand is a mere trifle, and will prove no bar to my marriage with the princess. I will at once obtain the slaves and jewels."

Aladdin retired to his own room and summoned the genie of the lamp, and ordered him at once to prepare the gift. Within a very short time forty black slaves, led by the same number of white slaves, appeared opposite the house in which Aladdin lived. Each black slave carried on his head a basin of solid gold, full of pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. Aladdin then addressed his mother: "Madam, pray take this present at once to the sultan to prove how sincere is my desire to marry his daughter."

When the magnificent procession, headed by Aladdin's mother, began to march from Aladdin's house, the city streets filled with people, all standing on tip-toe to see so grand a sight. The graceful bearing, elegant form, and wonderful likeness of each slave; their grave walk at an equal distance from each other; the lustre of their jewelled girdles, and the sparkle of precious stones in their turbans, excited the greatest admiration in the spectators. They were more splendid even than the emirs of the sultan's court.

When the sultan heard that they were coming, he gave orders for them to be admitted, so they marched straight into the divan in regular order, some turning to the right, and some to the left. After they had all entered, and were formed in a semicircle round the sultan's throne, the black slaves laid the golden trays on the carpet and all pro-